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{ From the Editor }

Milestones Around Our Necks

I KNEW WE were asking for trouble with our September blues tribute. From the start, it was clear we wouldn't be able to include every guitarist we wanted, from which it followed that some readers would be disappointed to find their favorite players missing from the issue. Judging by some letters we received, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Peter Green stood out as the most obvious omissions. We had our reasons. SRV was already pegged as our October cover story to commemorate the 30th anniversary of his death. As for Peter, we'd been working to score a new interview with him, 50 years after he departed Fleetwood Mac, to discuss his career before, during and after. Sadly, Peter Green died on July 25, at the age of 73.

That might have been the end of it, but a happy surprise awaited us. As it turned out, *GP* contributing writer Elliot Stephen Cohen had spoken with Peter in 2003, and his wide-ranging interview covered much of the same ground we'd hoped to. Better still, aside from roughly six questions and answers that were printed in *Guitar Player* back in 2003, Elliot's interview had never been published in its entirety. We're honored to present it here this month. As you'll see, Elliot had a fun and engaging interview with Peter, who was receptive and talkative, serving up figures of speech that were occasionally inscrutable but otherwise delightful.

To make the offering even more complete, we've teamed up Elliot's interview with the story of how Peter came to take over from Eric Clapton in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, with input from Mayall, Clapton and producer Mike Vernon. And that's not all. When "Vinyl Treasures" columnist Jim Campilongo learned what we had planned, he reached into his record collection and pulled out a plum: Fleetwood Mac's stellar 1969 release *Then Play On*. You can read his thoughtful take on that disc on page 33.

The package teams up nicely with what we had long prepared for our November cover story: a look inside the Rolling Stones' 1969 American tour, which returned them to concert stages after a nearly three-year absence. As you'll learn, the tour not only gave the Stones an opportunity to showcase their brilliant new guitarist, Mick Taylor, and the powerful dual-guitar sound he created with Keith Richards — it was also a milestone in the development of the modern concert event, and set a new standard for rock and roll shows. In addition, it gave us one of the all-time great live albums, *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!*, which was released 50 years ago, on September 4, 1970. Hearing that record today in all its raw glory is a reminder of how potent the Stones were in 1969, no small thanks to Taylor's masterful playing.

Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out! holds a special place in my collection. It was the first album I bought with my own money — ninth birthday money, as it happened — just a few weeks after its September 1970 release. I still remember the thrill of hearing it all those years ago, particularly the Stones' version of Chuck Berry's "Carol," Berry being, at the time, my favorite guitarist. I can also recall the look on my mother's face when she saw Charlie Watts' shirt on the album's cover. She let me keep the album anyway, and with good reason: It was always about the music. Though, this being the Stones, behind that music was a fair amount of danger, drugs and death. Read on.

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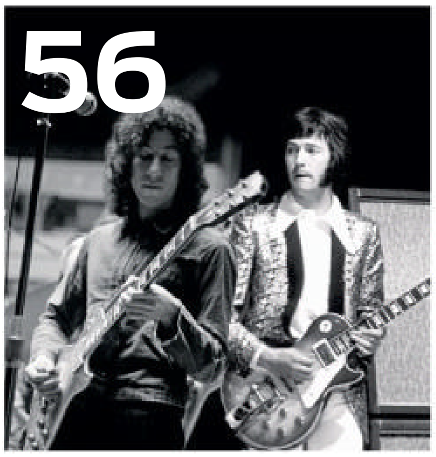

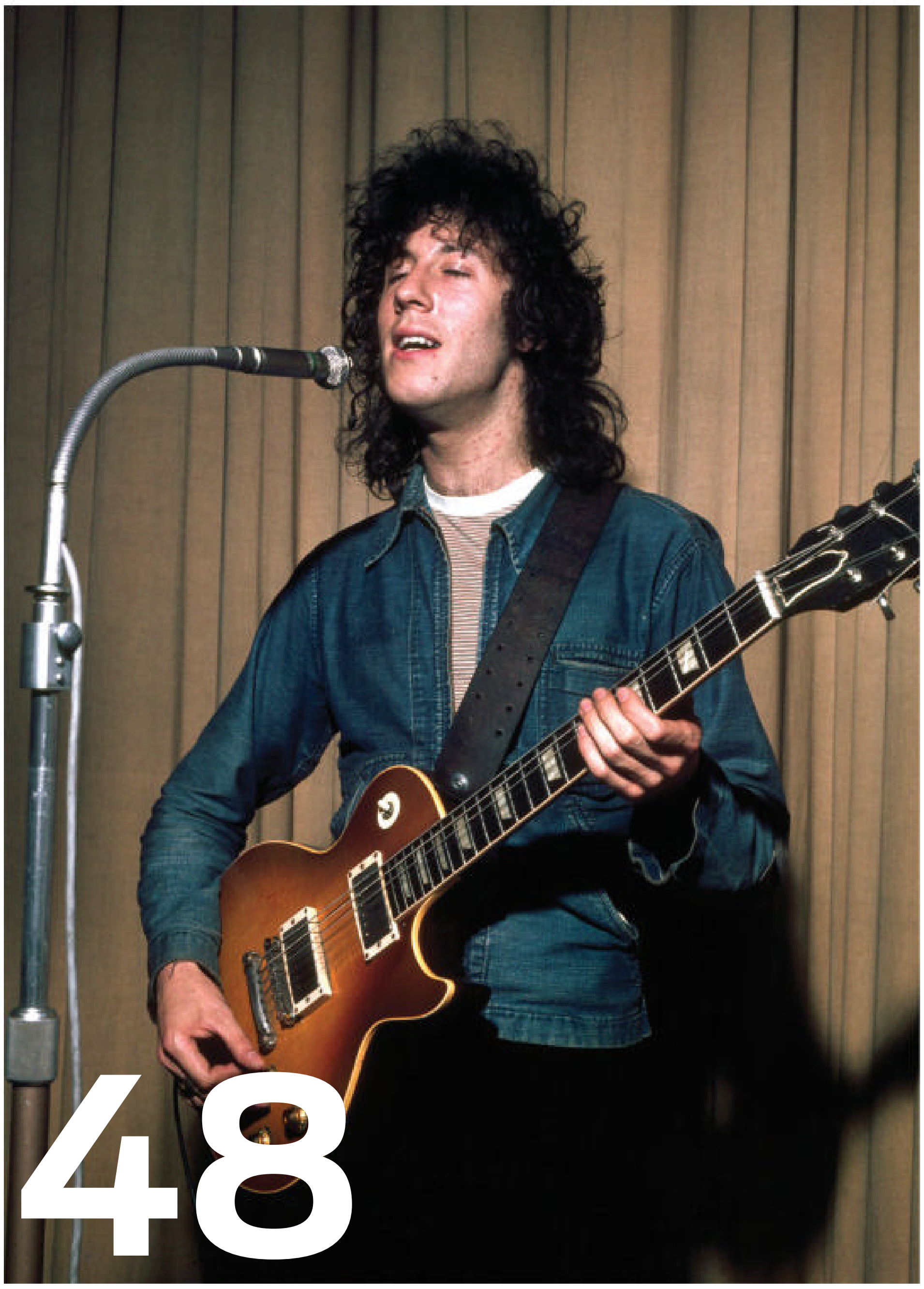

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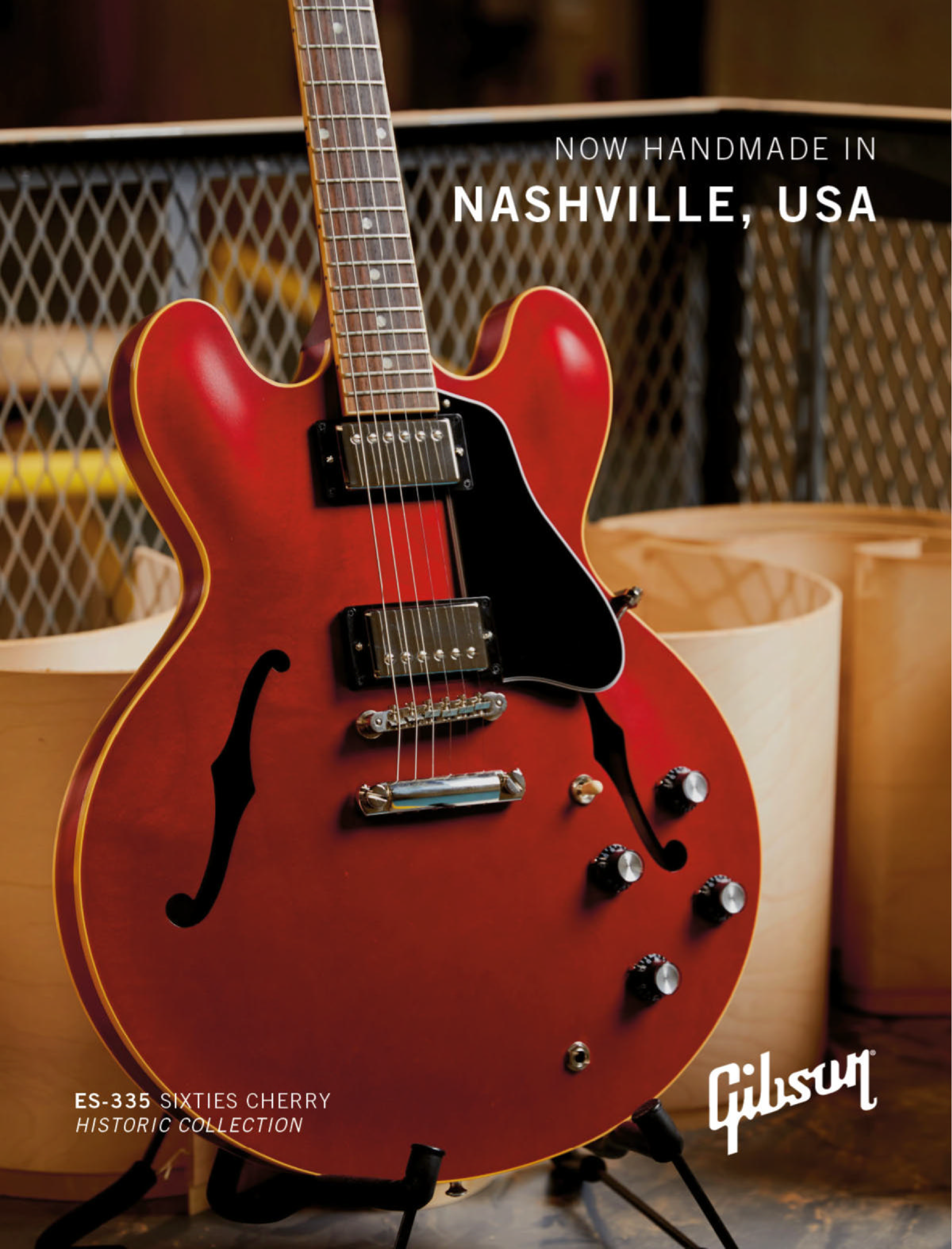
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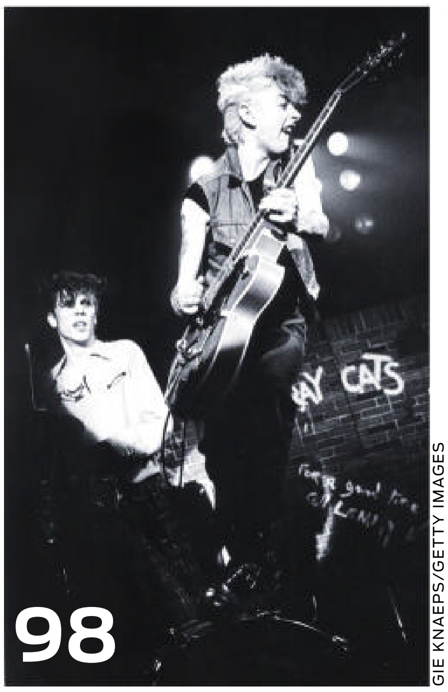

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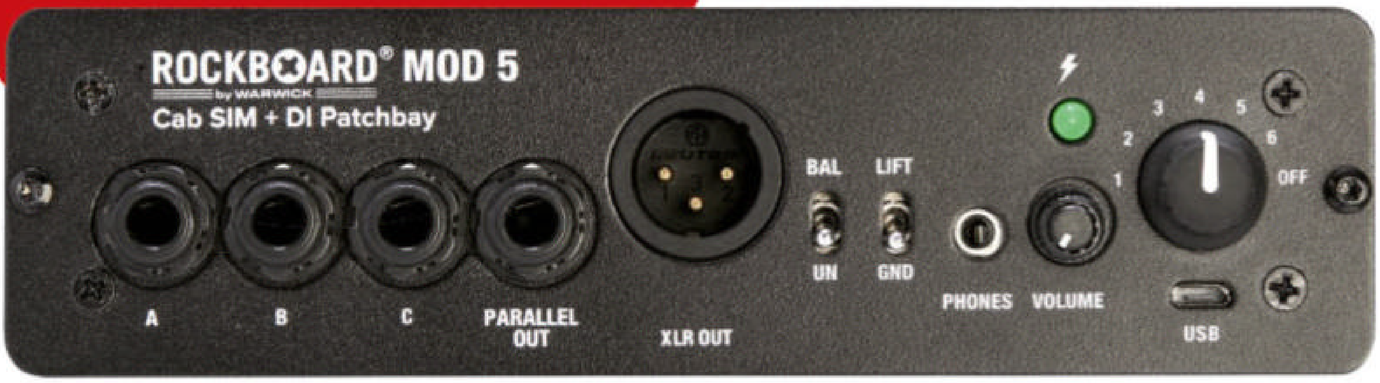
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HOW I WROTE... "MISSISSIPPI QUEEN"

Green Thoughts

Your Blues issue [*September 2020*] was a real treat. The British blues revival, in particular, influenced my guitar playing. Records by John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, Rory Gallagher and the Jeff Beck Group were worn out by being played to the wee hours each day.

I'm sure you will receive copious correspondence regarding who was left out of the recent issue. Can't please everyone, all the time. You did give [*Peter Green*] an entire sentence when picturing Fleetwood Mac at the bottom of page 49. I believe we owe him much more than that. I know I do. If not for Peter Green, I'd be much less of a guitar player. His tone and taste are unrivaled. — CHUCK GARDNER

I was very pleased to see your cover story on the blues-rock connection. However, as Peter Green is arguably the best U.K. blues guitarist ever, I was quite disappointed that Fleetwood Mac was relegated to a small corner of a page! "Black Magic Woman" by itself should have justified better coverage of this masterful guitar player/songwriter. Songs such as "Oh Well," "Man of the World" and "The Green Manalishi" (the progenitor of heavy metal) show off Peter's amazing talent at forging unique blues-rock classics. Peter's legacy is deserving of much better coverage, and I can only hope that you will be setting things right in your next issue. — DON VOCKEROTH

Winter Blues

Thanks for including Johnny Winter in your Blues issue. I got into guitar because of Johnny and tried to see him every chance I got back in the 1970s. I feel so lucky to have seen him when he was just starting out and making such a commotion. As far as I'm concerned, no contemporary blues guitarist has topped him. The man was a force of nature, a visitor from another planet who stopped here all too briefly. — TOM GRAFF, DETROIT

Can't Believe It's Not Butterfield

I am absolutely perplexed at the omission of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. No other band at its inception and through all its permutations had the power and musicianship they had. *East/West* pointed to a different direction many musicians would take. Paul Butterfield continued to make great and significant music until his death. I cannot believe the Butterfield Blues Band did not merit even a mention. It's damn near criminal!
— JK CONSTANTINE, STRAFFORD, N.H.

The King and I

I always look forward to getting *GP* in the mail, but the article on B.B. King and *Indianola Mississippi Seeds* [*September 2020*] really got my attention. As an aspiring 15-year-old guitarist who'd been cutting musical teeth on the Beatles, CCR, Steppenwolf and the like, *IMS* acquainted me with what I'd been missing and looking for. Soon after, I attended my first King concert. I was awestruck. The hook was set! I couldn't have imagined that, years later, as Mr. King was nearing the end of his career, I would have the opportunity to sit on his bus and visit with him. Once again, I was awestruck, this time by his graciousness, humility and friendliness.

In January 2018, nearly three years after Mr. King's death, my band and I had the good fortune to find ourselves in B.B.'s old stomping ground of Memphis, Tennessee, and in the semi-final round of the International Blues Challenge. My head was spinning when I thought about it all. It still does.

At 64 years old, and with a waning desire to run the roads playing music, I expect I've reached the pinnacle of my musical achievements with three semi-final trips to the IBC. But I'll always remember that none of it would have happened without the inspiration of B.B. King. Keep up the good work at *GP*. — RANDY COLVIN

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Enter 2020's biggest guitar-based talent search and let our star judges — including John Petrucci and Kaki King — decide!

IT'S TIME TO HIT THE WOODSHED! *Guitar Player* and its sister publications *Guitar World* and *Bass Player* have begun the search for the Guitarist of the Year. The categories for this year's contest include Electric Guitarist, Acoustic Guitarist, Bass Guitarist, Young Guitarist (17 and under) and Guitar Teacher of the Year.

In addition to walking away with prizes supplied by sponsors, winners will be featured in *Guitar Player*, *Guitar World* and *Bass Player*, and they'll get plenty of YouTube and online exposure. In fact, videos of the finals from the past two years' contests have generated more than four million views. Finalists will be selected by the magazines' editors and star judges. This year's panel includes **Molly Tuttle** and **Kaki King** for the Acoustic Division; **John Petrucci**, **John 5** and **Nita Strauss** for the Electric Division; and **Tracy Wormworth**, **Doug Wimbish** and **Scott Reeder** for Bass. Past Guitarist of the Year winners include Dave Kilminster (David Gilmour, Steven Wilson) and Guthrie Govan.

A $30 fee is required to enter each category, except Guitar Teacher of the Year, which is free to enter. Submissions are being accepted through October 31. For paid-entry categories, guitarists must shoot and upload a video of themselves to YouTube or Vimeo, fill out a short nomination form and submit the fee. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the NAMM Foundation. For Guitar Teacher of the Year, students must nominate their teachers, and teachers with the most nominations will be featured and judged.

WHAT THE JUDGES WANT TO SEE

- **Keep your video under three minutes.** And shoot it in a single take, with no editing.
- **We need to see you play.** And we need to see your face in the video. Also, your video should feature *only* you.
- **Get to the point.** Our experts are begging to be impressed, so three minutes of noodling won't make the grade.
- **Keep it musical.** We're all for fretboard madness and next-level sonics, but not at the expense of musicality and mastery.
- **Be impressive.** We want to see the full breadth of your skills in as tight a playing package as possible.
- **Make it sound and look good.** Smartphone video is fine, but remember to point the camera at yourself.

A FEW RULES

- You may enter all four categories with different videos. Want to test your talent in the Electric, Acoustic, Bass and Young Guitarist divisions? Go for it! Just remember, the entry fee per category is $30 (except for the Teacher of the Year division, which is free).
- All entries must be provided via videos uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo and submitted through **guitaristoftheyearawards.com**. No other points of contact will be accepted.
- Entries must be received by 11:59 p.m. EST, October 31, 2020.
- Young Guitarist of the Year entrants must be 17 or younger on October 31, 2020.
- Don't call us — we'll call you if we like what you're doing.
- You agree that we can share your video to our wider audience and that you will appear in Future Publishing magazines, on our websites, in our newsletters and elsewhere.
- The judges pick our finalists and eventual winners. Their decision is final.
- While we welcome entries from around the globe, travel costs associated with the prize will be considered only from within North America.

Guitarist of the Year is set to be the biggest guitar talent search of 2020, and the competition is now officially open for entries. Get involved by spreading the word through your websites and social channels, using the official hashtag #guitaristoftheyear.

For more information, please visit **guitaristoftheyearawards.com.**

MORE ONLINE!

Watch Sadler play and discuss these riffs at **guitarplayer.com/five-riffs-vaden**

My Life in Five Riffs

Sadler Vaden reveals the source of his classic-rock-influenced riffage.

BY JIM BEAUGEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY BY J.B. LAWRENCE

SADLER VADEN'S FIRST big break came when he landed a sideman gig with southern rockers Drivin N Cryin. Since 2013, he's been a guitar foil to Jason Isbell in the 400 Unit. Vaden's love of British Invasion rock and roll, Big Star, Tom Petty and Oasis is evident on his new solo album, *Anybody Out There* (Thirty Tigers). Here are the top five riffs that influenced him.

"AND YOUR BIRD CAN SING"
THE BEATLES

"I fell in love with the songs on *Revolver*. You could tell the Beatles were experimenting and getting better as musicians. This was one of the songs that really caught my attention. It took a long time for me to learn it, but when I did, I felt like I had reached a new place with my guitar playing, using all my fingers and working on my positioning — switching from double-stops and going all the way down the neck. After I learned it, I started to use similar voicings in other tunes I wrote."

"YOU SHOOK ME ALL NIGHT LONG"
AC/DC

"Like most young guitarists, I was a big fan of AC/DC. Their riffs are just visceral and make you feel good when you hear them. This guitar solo has a lot of things for a guitar player to know. It's mixing major and minor scales, and it makes good use of the fretboard. I also like the element of bending a note before you pick it, which is a really great technique to have. It's also just a very musical solo."

"SUBSTITUTE"
THE WHO

"The Who are one of my all-time favorite rock bands, and Pete Townshend is one of my favorite songwriters and guitarists. I like that he makes lead guitar lines out of rhythm guitar parts with big chords. I love this riff so much because it teaches you how to play chords that aren't cowboy chords. And in typical Townshend fashion, it involves a ringing string — that's his orchestral mind at work. When I learned this song as a young guitarist, it opened my mind up to the possibility that you can have all kinds of different voicings."

"PINK HOUSES"
JOHN MELLENCAMP

"The first day I ever picked up a guitar, I had just been to a Farm Aid concert in Columbia, South Carolina. When we got back home, my dad pulled his guitar out of the closet so he could try to figure out this song. I like this riff a lot, because you're sliding some single-note phrases and incorporating chords into the line as well. It's just a great way to start to develop your own riffs in songs. In that respect, this song was a good lesson. Instead of just playing chords and a solo, it's a combination of the two."

"HEY HEY, MY MY (INTO THE BLACK)"
NEIL YOUNG

"It was a big step for me to learn this song, because it got me out of playing just G, C and D chords and using things like minor chords and a full F chord. There's movement in the riff that, here again, incorporates single notes with chords, which I think is a big thing." ■

(from left) Matt Simms, Colin Newman, Graham Lewis and Robert Grey

> “EVERYBODY WAS THRASHING OUT MAJOR BARRE CHORDS, BUT THE FIRST THING YOU HEAR ON *PINK FLAG* IS A SLOW SONG IN D MINOR”

Beauty and the Buzz

On *Mind Hive*, Wire make a glorious noise.

BY MARK McSTEA

PHOTOGRAPH BY GIULIANA COVELLA

WIRE HAVE NEVER been easy to categorize. Rising from the British punk explosion in 1977, the band achieved critical acclaim with their debut album, *Pink Flag*, which showcased their uniquely off-kilter take on rock and pop music traditions. But Wire’s sound evolved quickly from the spiky, subversive, stiletto-like thrusts of their debut album into longer and more ambitious textural pieces where keyboards and echo-drenched guitars fought for space in a sonic landscape sporadically punctured by sharp, angular jabs of guitar.

Remarkably, *Pink Flag* had a huge influence on U.S. hardcore artists like Minutemen, Fugazi and Henry Rollins, while indie-rock bands like Sonic Youth and Guided By Voices have also indicated Wire’s influence on their music.

“*Pink Flag* was one of the few U.K. records from that punk period that got full U.S. distribution,” notes founding guitarist and vocalist Colin Newman. “Of course, in the U.K., punk had been much more influential than in America, and the DIY ‘form a band quickly’ notion, which inspired us, was commonplace there by ’78. It took longer to catch on in America.”

Wire worked sporadically in the ’80s and ’90s before reforming as a full-time group in 1999. Their latest, and 17th, studio album, *Mind Hive* (Pinkflag) finds Newman, guitarist Matt Simms, and co-founders bassist Graham Lewis and drummer Robert Grey spinning out incisive tunes that combine tense and ominous moods with sparkling guitars, grinding grooves and unease-provoking imagery. Newman and Simms spoke with *Guitar Player* about the group’s influential history and the inspirations behind their latest effort.

Has the name-checking by American artists you’ve influenced helped you build an audience in the U.S.?

Colin Newman Yes and no. I suppose “celebrity” endorsements can cut both ways. If you don’t like the artist plugging the band, you’re probably not going to check them out. Having said that, when our album *The Ideal Copy* came out [*in 1987*], the American licensee put a sticker on the cover with a quote from Michael Stipe of R.E.M. citing our influence, and as they were at the height of their success at that time, I do think it was actually very helpful.

***Pink Flag*, while clearly in the punk spirit, was actually quite a different album from the work of your contemporaries.**

Newman I actually don’t like rock and roll very much, and a lot of the punk bands were still playing music bound by its conventions. I tried to subvert the concept by writing in different ways, such as reductionism — using fewer chords and brevity — and by using minor chords, which I think is something that really distinguished Wire from our peers. Everybody was thrashing out major barre chords, but the first thing you hear on *Pink Flag* is a slow song in D minor [*"Reuters"*].

What got you into music and the desire to play an instrument?

Newman I was told to play by my childhood friend Desmond Simmons. We formed a band, CNDS — our initials — and he said I needed to get a guitar. I bought a Suzuki copy of a Martin. I've written virtually every song on that guitar.

Matt Simms When I was starting to play guitar, I took a Sonic Youth track to my guitar teacher, and he realized it was in an altered tuning. He explained that to me, and that sparked my interest in exploring unusual tunings. I invent them to fit the songs, where I can. For about half the songs on *Mind Hive*, I tuned all the strings to E or B. After I joined the band, I learned that Bruce Gilbert, Wire's original guitarist, also used altered tunings.

Colin, in light of your anti-hero perspective, it's slightly ironic that you play your own signature guitar, the Eastwood Colin Newman Airline model.

Newman I chose one that I liked from the website purely based on the color, Seafoam Green. I said, "I'd love to get a version of this with piezo pickups to capture the acoustic sound for live performance." They said, "We can do that *and* make it your signature guitar." Amp-wise I've been using a Roland JC-40. I was using a JC-120, and it was far too loud for the stage, and with the volume way down it doesn't really get the best out of it. The 40-watt version is much more effective, and it accepts a stereo input.

Simms I love [*Fender*] Jazzmasters. I've got two Japanese models. I'd like to get one of the new American models soon. I like the way you can get sounds behind the bridge, the way the tremolo works, and that it can sound bright and aggressive or really warm. I'm also a big fan of low-wattage amps. I use a lot of pedals, and those amps seem to work better. I recently got a Supro Blues King. I really like how it breaks up in such a musical fashion when it's pushed hard.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Mind Hive
"Hung," "Humming," "On the Beach," "Primed and Ready," "Unrepentant"

CARNEY JAMES TURNER

Effects play a big part in the Wire sound, don't they?

Simms Yes. I have so many pedals. Particular favorites would be the Malekko Omicron Fuzz, 616 Ekko and Charlie Foxtrot pedals, as well as the Red Panda Particle and Earthquaker Devices Avalanche Run.

***Mind Hive* has an interesting mix of commercial, hooky tracks, like "On the Beach" and "Oklahoma," along with much more groove-orientated tracks, like "Hung." Where does that mix of influences come from?**

Newman I've always been very influenced by the Beatles, particularly their attitude of not being afraid to mix styles. We always had the approach when we made an album of treating every track as if it's a single.

Simms I think the focus was to put together a track list that made for a cohesive mix. I spent a lot of time sequencing the new album. A few song orders were suggested, but I wasn't convinced by them, so I had a go. And it seemed to work.

How do you work out your guitar parts for the songs?

Newman I will have written everything beforehand. The rest of the guys don't hear anything before the recording sessions start, as I don't find that useful. I'll tell everyone what the chords are as we go through, and I'll shout out where the verses and choruses are.

Simms We don't spend a long time working through a song. If something isn't sparking quickly, we tend to move on. There's a lot of intuition and instant feedback between us, but not much discussion about where we think things should go.

Do you like to play guitar every day?

Newman I only ever play when I have to, either to record, write a song or play live. And I only ever write songs when it's time to prepare the next album. I don't want to overhone my craft. I think Wire is an artistic project. We aren't professional musicians. It isn't about that. It's about trying to translate a vision in the purest way possible.

Simms I'm always playing. If I've got time to sit down and play, it's the best thing I can do. I think, on that front, Colin and I couldn't be more different.

What are your personal favorite tracks on *Mind Hive*?

Newman "On the Beach," for its audacious pop sensibility, coupled with dark lyrics. "Unrepentant," for that gorgeous big analog-synth kind of sound. "Primed and Ready," because it's so simplistic. "Hung," because you think it's all going to be about the noise, but it gets quieter at the end. And "Humming," because I think if you're not crying by the end of it, there must be something wrong with you.

Simms "Hung" is an obvious one. It didn't work the first time we recorded it. We all went out for dinner, and when we came back and tried again, it all came together.

"Hung" lasts as long as about six *Pink Flag* songs combined.

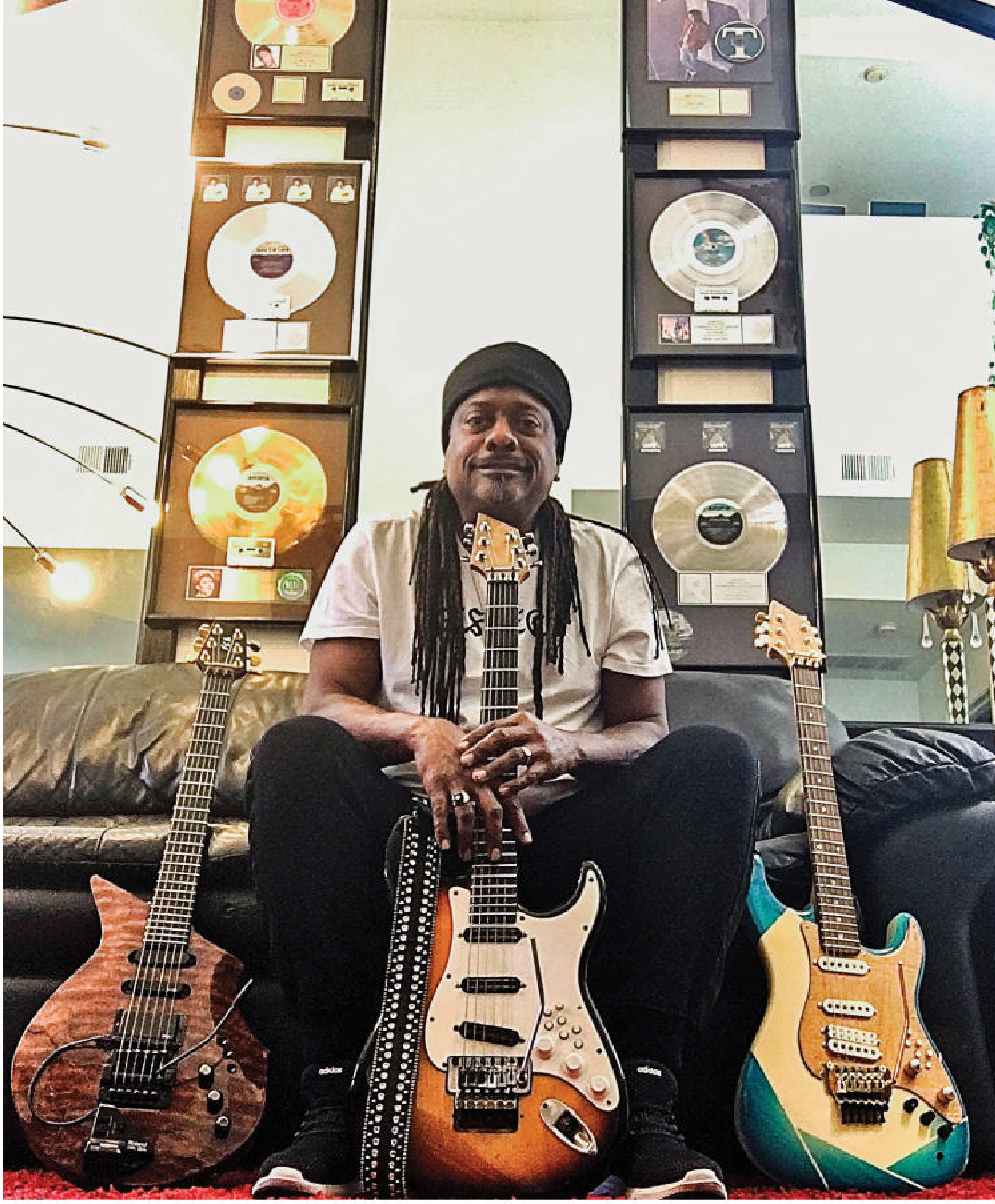
Newman That's the result of listening to it a lot and heavily editing it down to its final length. It's the longest song, with the least lyrics. It's subtle, as there are chords and notes that continually evolve over an E pedal. It's like the sonic definition of Wire: a layer of beauty over a layer of noise.

PROFILE

All-Terrain Guitar Hero

Stunt guitarist to the stars, Vernon Ice Black reflects on what it takes to be both a solo artist and a genre-hopping studio pro.

BY JUDE GOLD



Black's guitars include Sunnie (center); Mahogany (left), built by Phillip Ralph, with a quilted mahogany body, EMG pickups and Kahler bridge; and Blue (right), made in Tokyo by KT/Sato, with Seymour Duncan Hot Rails and a JB bridge pickup, plus a Floyd Rose, like Sunnie. All three feature Black's custom preamp/EQ boost and pickup-selector buttons.

FOR MANY GUITARISTS, the ultimate dream is to join a great band, land some hit songs and become a star. For other players, the dream is less about individual stardom and more about building a decades-long career touring, composing and recording with superstars.

If working with legends has ever interested you, then session guitar ace, touring veteran, producer, singer and solo artist Vernon Ice Black should be an absolute hero to you. His guitar adventures span more genres and great artists than we have room to print here, though suffice to say he's worked with Aretha Franklin, Mariah Carey, Herbie Hancock, Jaco Pastorius, Chaka Khan, Kenny Loggins, Whitney Houston (that's Black playing lead guitar in Houston's "So Emotional" video), Steve Winwood, Busta Rhymes, Celine Dion, India Arie and Stevie Wonder ("the eighth wonder of the world," as Black calls him), to name a few.

Some gigs have left an emotional impact that he feels to this day. Recalling his stint as a musical director at the 1995 Jimi Hendrix Festival in Seattle, where he performed with Hendrix's late bandmates Mitch Mitchell and Noel Redding, Black fights back tears.

"There was a moment that day that was so powerful," he says. "To most people, the fact that Jimi was a paratrooper is just a historical footnote, but on this day — I think right when we were playing 'Purple Haze' — some planes from his division flew in low, right over the stadium, in formation, and timed it perfectly with the song's solo section. It was such a dramatic way to honor Jimi.

"I'm getting emotional just thinking about it, because Jimi was huge for me. He was a guitar player who just went for it. I loved how he had this rock thing about him, yet he was also an R&B, funk and blues guy. And I loved that his playing had this adventurous, balls-to-the-wall, 'this is how I feel' attitude about it, too."

> **"THE WAY GUYS LIKE HERBIE HANCOCK, McCOY TYNER, COLTRANE, OSCAR PETERSON, AND KEITH JARRETT PHRASED STUFF, TIME IS KING. THE SILENCES BETWEEN NOTES CAN BE BEAUTIFUL NOTES TOO"**

Hendrix, however, was a later influence. When Black was growing up in Kansas City, Missouri, it was non-guitarists such as Herbie Hancock, James Brown, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and Mozart who had a profound sway on him, well before he ever got into fretted heroes such as Wes Montgomery, Johnny Winter, Jeff Beck, John McLaughlin, Paco De Lucía and Hendrix.

"Once, when I was with Herbie," says Black, who played guitar and bass for the jazz legend in 1994 and 1995, "I told him that he was one of my very favorite guitar players." Black laughs at the memory. "I said that because I learned so much from him and guys like McCoy Tyner, Coltrane, Oscar Peterson, and Keith Jarrett. Sure, they would play, say, a minor pentatonic lick, as we guitarists do. But then maybe they'd add a 6 to it. Next, they go up a whole step from there, and then another whole step, until you're hearing a totally different sound — the whole-tone scale. And that was just the harmonic and melodic side. We haven't even talked about time, yet. The way they phrased stuff, time is king. The silences between notes can be beautiful notes too."

Black's favorite guitar is Sunnie, a custom electric solidbody fitted with Seymour Duncan Hot Rails pickups and LaBella .010–.046 strings. He put the guitar together with tech help from Joel Tosta and Gary Brawer in the early '80s, when he was getting established in the San Francisco Bay Area music scene, the region that has remained his home ever since.

"I was a kid with $27 to my name, so I bought a body shaped like a Stratocaster," Black says, explaining Sunnie's origins. "Dan Ransom built me a custom bird's-eye maple neck with an ebony fretboard and Dunlop 6100 frets. Gary installed the early model Floyd Rose tremolo you see on there today. The push buttons on the pickguard allow for different coil combinations. One of them boosts things by activating a custom preamp/EQ. I call that the 'whoop-de-doo button,'" he adds, with a laugh.

A self-confessed gear nerd and "studio rat," Black was also involved in the design of ADA's popular '90s programmable tube guitar preamp, the MP-2. "I was in France with Herbie, and we pulled into some city, only to discover that my rack full of gear had been stolen the night before," Black recalls. "People were sent scrambling to find it, and somehow they got it back to me before the show. When I opened it up, everything was still there — my power amp, my effects racks — except for my MP-2. That's the only thing the thieves stole! I kind of took it as a compliment."

After becoming an established touring and session guitarist, Black emerged as an in-demand musical director. One high-profile gig he took on was leading the touring band for the Spice Girls at the peak of their fame.

"Usually it's keyboard players who get the big MD gigs, so it was interesting being a guitarist in that chair," says Black, who has also directed for Booker T. Jones, the Family Stone and other acts. "It was [*bassist, composer, producer and music director*] Rickey Minor who hired me. He said, 'There's a Spice Girls tour coming up. You ready to go?'

"Why did he pick me? Well, maybe because he knows I love hearing every note, beat, silent space, sound, tone, vocal and vocal harmony in the song, and I love knowing every peak and valley that's in a song's arrangement. I was always the kind of person who, after the session was done and my gear was all packed up, would ask the engineers if I could stick around and be a fly on the wall and watch them work, because I'd be so inspired learning what they do. I think being obsessed with every detail like that helps a guy like Rickey Minor have confidence in you when he taps you on the shoulder and says, 'Tag, you're it.'"

As for Black's solo work, one of his more recent tunes, "One World," brings, almost presciently, a well-needed message of love and unity in a year that has brought a global pandemic, intensified political tribalism and the nation-shaking police killing of George Floyd. "We were getting lynched in different ways before, and we're still getting lynched today," Black says. "What I love about what's happening now is that when you look at people in the streets protesting — and I've been one of them — you see multiracial, multicolor crowds. That is the true America. My songs are about this stuff, but in smoother terms and different wordings."

While it's hard to find a guitarist more grateful than Black ("I love all styles of music and always wanted to play them all, and Most High gave that to me"), he has one bit of coaching to offer studio and touring guitarists.

Performing at the Latitude Festival, July 19, 2014

ANDY SHEPPARD/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

"Get the business side of things together," he advises, "especially if you want to establish yourself as a solo artist. I always believed that good music and great artistry would speak strongly enough for itself to carry the business part of things, but that hasn't proven true. I've played so many genres of music, all over the world, yet not all of it has been captured and spread around effectively.

"So my word to artists is be strong, aware and connected on the business end. I take inspiration from Duke Ellington and Miles Davis. They were great bandleaders who also knew how to get their music out there."

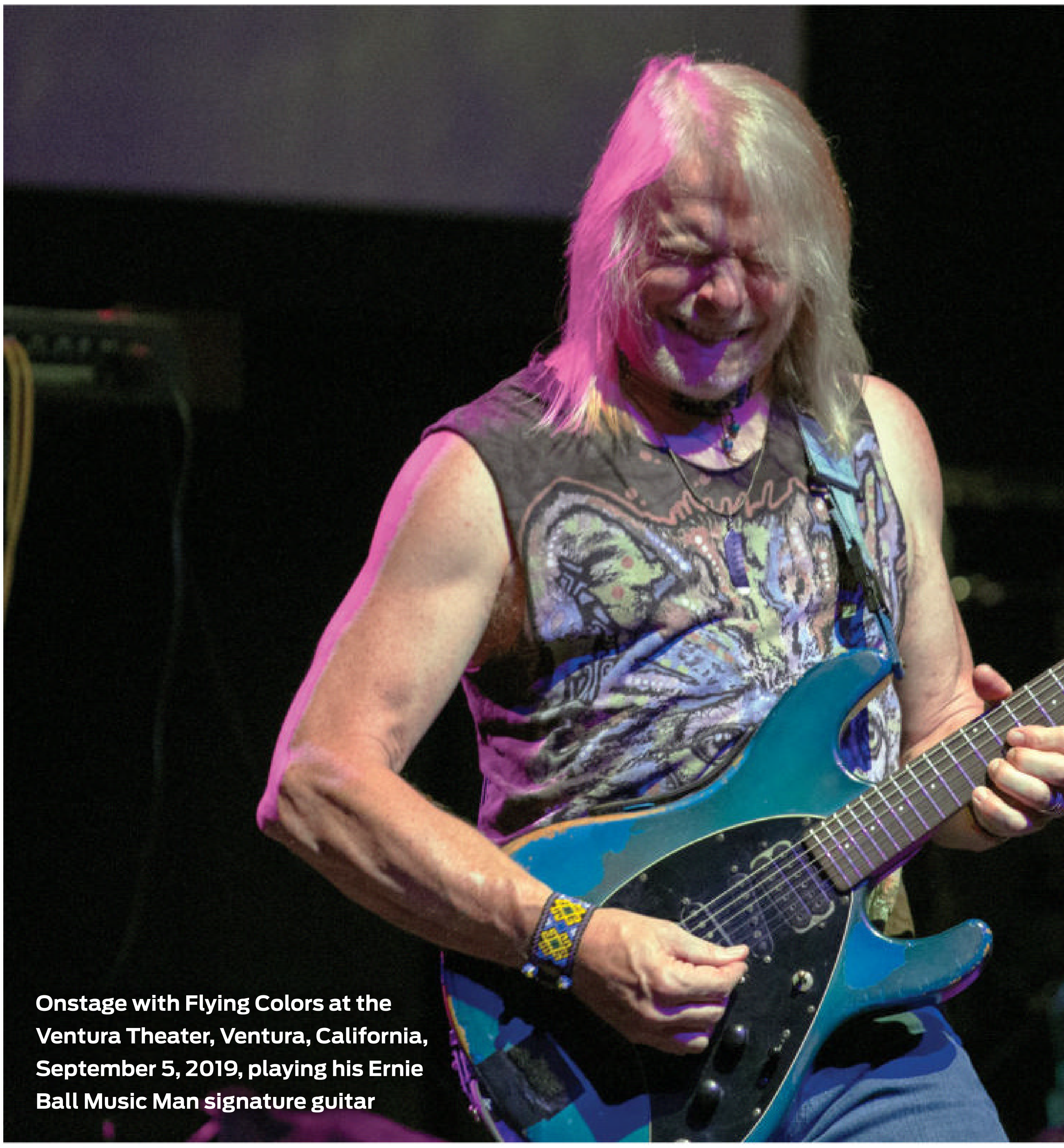
Lastly, Black advises players to never grow up. At least not completely.

"Music is a kid's game," he says. "Don't get old and grumpy. Don't ever lose that childlike spirit of musical exploration. Hold onto that vibrancy forever." ▪

My Career in Five Songs

Bach transcriptions, power chords and grasshoppers. Steve Morse reflects on inspired tracks from his long career.

BY MARK McSTEA



Onstage with Flying Colors at the Ventura Theater, Ventura, California, September 5, 2019, playing his Ernie Ball Music Man signature guitar

STEVE MORSE HAS a long history with *Guitar Player*. Back in 1981, readers voted Dixie Dregs' *Industry Standard* the year's Best Guitar Album, while Morse himself received Best Overall Guitarist, an accolade he won for five years in a row, at which point he entered the *Guitar Player* Gallery of Greats. In 1984, "The Introduction," the title track from his solo debut album, was featured on our flexi disc Soundpage, giving readers a chance to enjoy his unique combination of melodic invention and insane chops. It was the age of shred, and Morse was ahead of the game, thanks to his success with the Dregs, who combined southern rock, fusion and prog in a distinctive sonic stew. In our present age of socially conscious rebranding, it's interesting to recall why the Dregs dropped *Dixie* from their name. "Audiences thought we were some kind of Dixieland jazz band," Morse explains. "We were just three kids coming up with band names as a joke, and we thought the Dixie Dregs sounded funny. None of us were even from the South."

Morse's solo career really took off with "Tumeni Notes," from his third solo album, 1989's *High Tension Wires*. The track is a master class in alternate picking, on which he displays the face-melting speed most players can achieve only with sweep picking. By then, he'd been a member of Kansas, which he joined in 1985. Since 1994, Morse has been in Deep Purple, who have just released *Whoosh!* (earMUSIC), a collection of thoughtful and inventive songs that take their lyrical cue from today's world and the direction in which it's headed, without ever sounding preachy or sanctimonious.

On the new record, Morse's playing is as invigorating as ever, and while he suffers from arthritis, it's had no discernible effect on his ability to weave his signature lines in and out of Deep Purple's distinctive sound. "It's in my family," he says of his arthritis. "There's no doubt that all my years of playing have made it worse, but I've adapted my technique to deal with it. The most difficult has been trying to pick from the elbow rather than the wrist. Most of my technical practice is designed to perfect that. I go through a show pretty well now, though at times there is lot of pain that requires pharmaceuticals. I tried a treatment of blood-sucking mosquitos yesterday," he says, laughing. "But it didn't seem to help!"

Like other performing acts, Deep Purple have been sidelined by covid-19 and the worldwide shutdown of live music. "We've lost 18 months of work," Morse laments. "We've only played one show this year. It is so bad for so many artists who have depended on their live income. For a lot of people, royalties don't help much, even when they're getting them. You look at Spotify and you'd need a computer to work out what percentage of one percent your royalty check would be."

In addition to Deep Purple, Morse has continued to work with his Flying Colors side project, which released its third studio album, *Third Degree*, last year, and has just issued the new live album *Third Stage: Live in London*. He has also periodically revisited the Dregs, both to tour and record. Given his long career and numerous bands, we were curious to see which five tracks Morse considers among his most important.

"TAKE IT OFF THE TOP"

DIXIE DREGS, *WHAT IF* (1978)

"I was working on an idea for a song, and I realized that I wanted to compose more parts for it, rather than have a lot of improvisation. When the verse came in, it had a lot of power chords, and the idea was to start with the rock riff in E. I was trying to simplify my writing a bit, but then I slipped back into the more complex route, just like somebody falling off the wagon. [*laughs*] The song has a bit of

MATT QUINA/PROG MAGAZINE

WACKEN OPEN AIR

With (from left) Roger Glover and Ian Gillan at Deep Purple's 2013 Wacken Open Air performance

CARSTEN WINDHORST/PROG MAGAZINE

With Flying Colors bassist Dave LaRue, Shepherd's Bush Empire, London, December 14, 2019

southern rock, fusion... You know, that mixture that is kinda like the Dregs' philosophy. I can't really help that, because I don't see any real distinctions between styles. I basically play a style of music that I call 'tonal music.' I don't write in atonal styles. Others might say it *is* different styles, but I'd probably say that they're sub-styles.

"There's a lot of commonality between disparate musical genres. For example, church organ music and the chord progressions in a lot of heavy songs have a lot in common. On the first part of the song, I'm choking the pick with my fingers and moving back up the low-E string to generate those harmonics. It's a subtle effect, but I think it makes listeners sit up and pay attention."

"NIGHT MEETS LIGHT"
DIXIE DREGS, *WHAT IF* (1978)

"This song marks the first time I ever composed a piece following nothing but the melody. A lot of times I think of chords and melody together, but not for this. It was a bit like a violin piece or something, where I was chasing the melody and I ended up with some interesting arpeggiated parts and some very confusing timing. When I was finished and I analyzed it, I thought, Oh boy! [*laughs*] The timing sometimes changes from one bar to the next. I tried to fix it and make it more regular, but it sounded dumb.

"Back when we cut this track, we used to play shows for a percentage of the door. At the time, we were up in the mountains of Virginia, about 700 miles from home, and we were broke. It was a week before our next gig, which we hoped would pay enough to get us back home. We were staying in some cabins that were usually used for skiers; it was out of season, so no one was there, and we could stay all week for free. We were so poor that Steve Davidowski, our keyboard player, was catching grasshoppers to eat. [*laughs*]

"While we waited for the gig, we set up all of our gear and played each day. I showed the song to the guys, and we kept working on it. It went through a period of evolution and refinement, which caused them some frustration. They'd say, 'That's not how you played it a few minutes ago!' And I'd say, 'I'm refining it!'" [*laughs*]

> **"WE WERE UP IN THE MOUNTAINS OF VIRGINIA, ABOUT 700 MILES FROM HOME, AND WE WERE BROKE"**

On tour with Deep Purple at Motorpoint Arena, Cardiff, Wales, November 20, 2017, with his Ernie Ball Music Man Steve Morse SM Y-2D (left) and Ball Family Reserve Steve Morse HH in Tahitian Blue

OLLY CURTIS/TOTAL GUITAR MAGAZINE

“TUMENI NOTES”
STEVE MORSE, *HIGH TENSION WIRES* (1989)

“When I was learning to play classical guitar, I played through a lot of traditional studies. They would concentrate on left-hand position, right-hand technique or whatever, and I used those concepts to find ways to home in on things that I felt needed work in my own playing. I still write my own studies to fix possible weak links in my playing, and that’s how ‘Tumeni Notes’ evolved. I was trying to improve my one-note-per-string skipping technique with the pick, and the B section — where it goes to C sus and then G/C — remains the hardest thing I’ve ever written. When you write something, you play it over and over to get the right combination to please your ear, and at that point it didn’t seem like it was impossible to play. The piece fit me like a glove, performance-wise. Now it is like a death trap. [*laughs*] It particularly exacerbates my wrist problems. At that time, I twisted my wrist and picked in an arc, which enabled me to get accuracy and speed, and I could mute and unmute with the palm of my hand, which made it exceptionally clean. Now it’s different. I have to use the traditional non-arcing technique. I still have speed, but I can’t jump between the strings as easily.”

> **“I WAS PLAYING BOB EZRIN’S CHEAP DANELECTRO/SEARS BARITONE GUITAR, WHICH HAS STRINGS LIKE RADIO ANTENNAS”**

“HEREAFTER”
DIXIE DREGS, *DREGS OF THE EARTH* (1980)

“Almost everything on this could be played as a solo classical guitar piece, with the melody on top of the chords. It was very intently through-composed. I really like the chordal movement in it. All the chords have slight suspensions, and a lot of them have inner moving voices as it changes. I like the way the melody and harmony run through at the same time in some places. I think there’s a lot of Celtic influence in my playing from my grandfather being a Cajun fiddler; I think there are many similarities between the two styles. I also listened to and played a lot of traditional music, like John Dowland lute pieces and Bach transcriptions for classical guitar. Those influences really come through on ‘Hereafter,’ which, to my ears, has quite an ancient feel about it at times. I definitely gravitate to Renaissance-period music, where so much lute music has been transcribed for classical guitar. I actually played it on acoustic 12-string, which is very difficult to keep in tune with the moving voices.”

“MAN ALIVE”
DEEP PURPLE, *WHOOSH!* (2020)

“Some of the suspensions in the chords require very long stretches to get those different voicings, which are a key part of the sound. They’re not terribly unworkable positions, but it’s definitely a big difference from the traditional thumb-over-the-neck rock power-chord grips. The solo on this is an attempt to play something different from what I would normally do. Bob Ezrin, the producer, didn’t like the jazzy overtones that I was bringing to it. He wanted me to go for something simple. I was playing his cheap Danelectro/Sears baritone guitar, which has strings like radio antennas. [*laughs*] The good thing about long, high-tension strings is that it’s really easy to get artificial harmonics, and they ring very true. It forced me to keep the solo slow and simple.

“A guitar that compels you to play differently really helps you concentrate on the music. I used artificial harmonics on almost every note. It stands out in my mind as a weird combination of things that make it a little different from the rest of my work on the new album.”

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Gold Rush

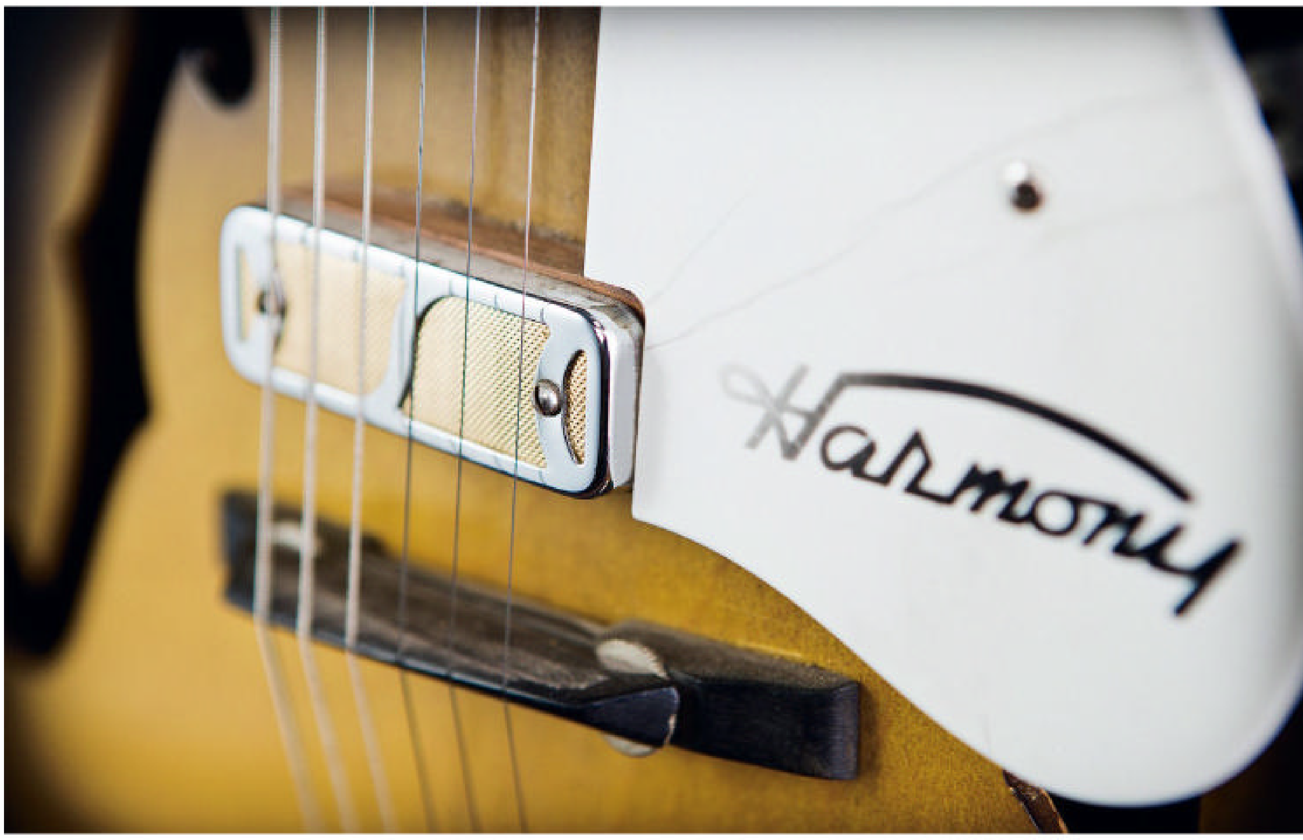
Once dismissed for their budget-guitar origins, Rowe/DeArmond gold-foil pickups are now coveted for their tone.

FOR THE PAST several years, enthusiasm for vintage gold-foil pickups has remained one of the most consistent micro-trends on the electric guitar scene. Thousands of players have discovered the sonic appeal of these components from B-list and catalog-grade guitars, but rarely is this pickup adequately explained and, hence, fully understood. As a result, the humble gold-foil has acquired a mystique. Meanwhile, a pair of originals are now often worth more than the entry-level guitar they came with.

Lusting after vintage pickups is nothing new. Guitarists have long paid a premium for pre-CBS single-coil Fender Stratocaster and Telecaster pickups. Early 1950s Gibson P-90s have long been prized, and a good pair of original PAFs from the late part of that decade might cost you as much as a low-mileage used car these days. More recently, though, many players have discovered that a low-budget contemporary of these hallowed components from the '50s and '60s can deliver about as much aural magic and touchy-feely playability as any of the A-list coils. And thus the cult of the gold-foil has made its place among us.

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

> Rubberized-ferrite magnet
> Gold-embossed card stock adorning the top plate
> Chromed open-frame S cover
> Wound with 44-AWG wire to approximately 9.5 –12 kΩ DC resistance
> Unpotted coil


PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM GASSON

Several different pickups from the late '50s to late '60s are generically referred to as gold-foils, but here we'll concentrate on one particular and popular type, while touching on a few others to note their similarities and differences. These pickups get their name from a foil-like piece of gold card that covers the plastic plate above the coil and is visible through the cutouts in the metal cover. Although this material looks similar to the foil that covers the blades of an electric shaver, in most instances it isn't really foil at all but an embossed paper stock of the type that might have been used for holiday decorations or greeting cards from the era. The perceived appearance results in the *gold-foil* descriptor, which today is used to describe several different makes and models of pickups, including some that are similarly constructed but otherwise different and may not even feature the decorative foil card.

Under the microscope this month are the pickups made by Rowe Industries for DeArmond. These were used on many Harmony and Silvertone guitars from the late '50s through the mid '60s, on which they were often billed as Golden Tone pickups. They are generally seen with the gold-paper top beneath a partially cut-out chromed-metal cover, often called an S cover for the wiggly piece that bisects the opening. However, some models have silver-foil tops and covers with diamond cutouts, while others feature black tops and are often referred to as blackjack pickups. Regardless, all are constructed in the same fashion and sound the same, although, theoretically, like most vintage pickups, their tone can vary quite a bit, depending on how much wire was wound onto the coil and the relative strength of the magnet.

In principle, these are extremely simple creations, but they also represent something of a lucky accident, as they sound superb in many applications. Construction of this type of Rowe/DeArmond gold-foil involves winding several turns of thin, 44-AWG wire around a thick magnet of rubberized ferrite, a chunkier version of the type found on those semiflexible refrigerator magnets. These pickups have no real bobbin as such, just the wire wound around the magnet, plus bottom and top plates made of thin plastic, a metal baseplate, and the decorative card and cover sitting above. Stack it all together and this gold-foil pickup is only about 1/8-inch tall, making it well suited to surface mounting on a guitar's top.

Many players who connect a multimeter to this type of gold-foil come away thinking it's a fairly hot pickup, thanks to its average DC resistance reading of roughly 9.5 to 12 k ohms. That spec is somewhat misleading, however, since the use of thinner wire results in a higher resistance reading relative to signal output.

BY DAVE HUNTER

> **THERE'S AN UNDEFINABLE MAGIC IN A GOOD GOLD-FOIL, AN ABILITY TO BE CLEAR AND BITING IN THE PICK ATTACK, WHILE ALSO SLIGHTLY SOFT AND COMPRESSED**

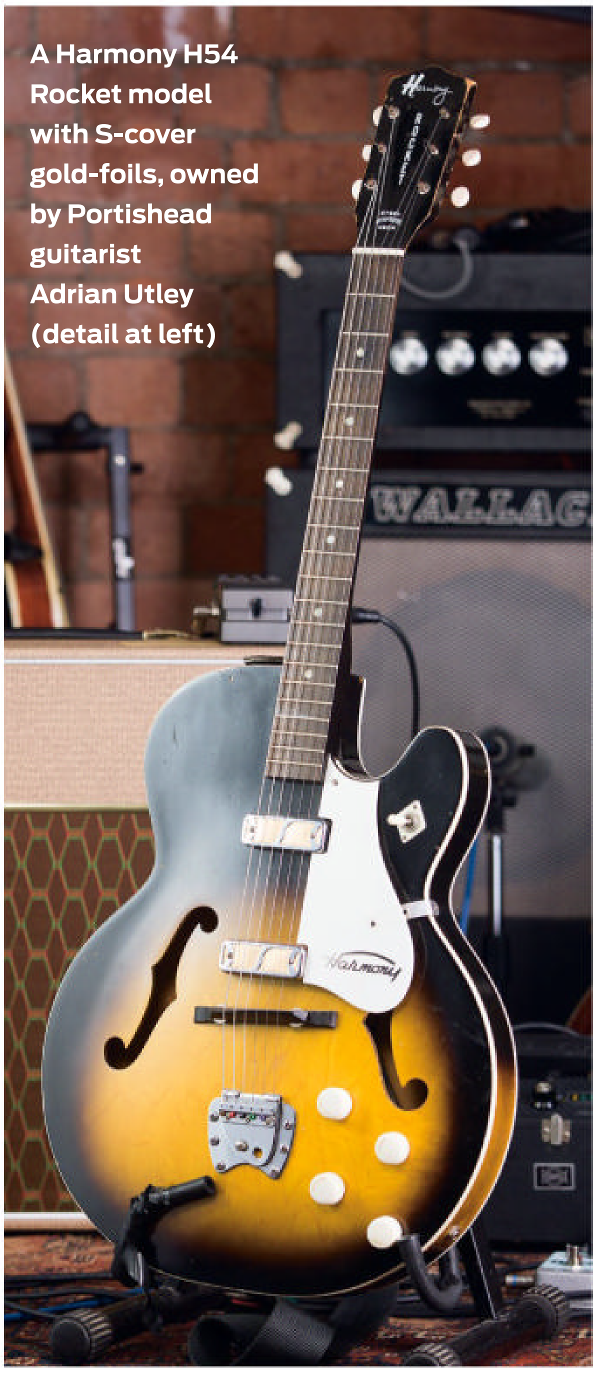
Even so, these pickups drive an amp well for single-coils, pushing into edge-of-breakup tones more readily than the average vintage-wound Strat or Tele pickup, while retaining a lot of clarity and articulation. There's a certain undefinable magic in a good gold-foil that has led to the craze for these things — a seemingly contradictory ability to be simultaneously clear and biting in the pick attack, while also slightly soft and compressed; to deliver thick and creamy lows and mids, as well as clear and expressive upper mids and highs that are never spiky. Apply distortion, and a more gnarly, raw character shines through, with an admirable retention of articulation. Just call it "personality" — gold-foils have a lot of it, which simply makes them a delectable vintage tone generator by any standards.

When set up correctly, the department-store and catalog-grade guitars that carried these pickups can be genuine tone monsters, thanks in large part to the gold-foils. Unfortunately, while some Harmony and Silvertone guitars played better than others, these low-cost brands were the downfall of the pickups' reputations. Yet, as Ry Cooder discovered several decades ago about his favored Teisco model, a good Rowe/DeArmond gold-foil can sound sublime when mounted on a better-built guitar. For the sound of gold-foils used with original vintage guitars, check out the playing of Tom Brenneck with the Dap-Kings, or Dan Auerbach with the Black Keys, who cover the clean-to-mean spectrum, respectively.

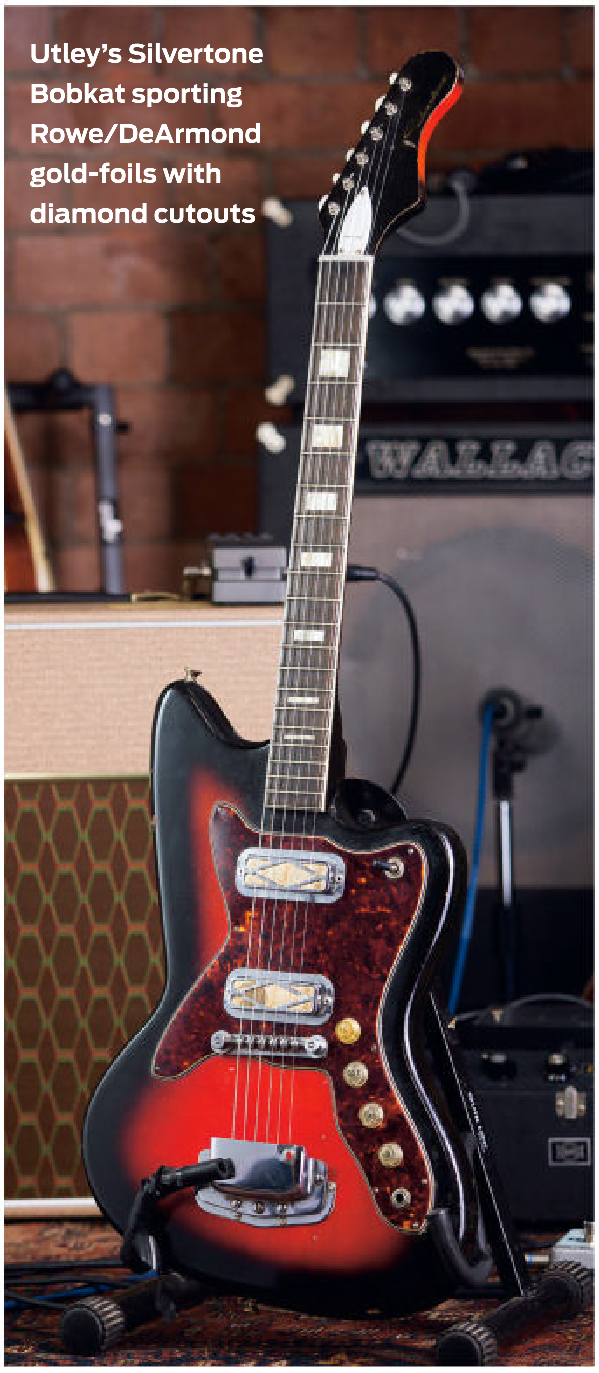
Other breeds of gold-foil pickups differed somewhat, though most have a little something in common with this architecture. The coveted Hershey-bar pickups on late-'50s Harmony Stratotone guitars were very similar but constructed beneath an enclosed metal cover, without any gold card showing. Rowe/DeArmond also supplied a pickup that was similar, aside from a row of adjustable pole pieces running down the center of the unit and a cover with four f-hole-like cutouts, commonly referred to as a moustache cover. These are great-sounding gold-foil pickups as well, and are wound with somewhat less wire and have lower resistance readings as a result.

Japanese makers Teisco and Guyatone also made versions of gold-foils that players have enjoyed over the years. The more popular renditions of these sport six adjustable pole pieces off to the side of the main coil, which are in fact largely for show and tend to make the pickups look a little like a mini-humbucker, although they are definitely single-coils.

The craze for gold-foils, and the scarcity and skyrocketing prices of good original vintage examples, has led many contemporary replacement-pickup makers to offer reproductions of some favorites. Other manufacturers have extrapolated from the format to produce modified renditions and even humbucking gold-foils. Curtis Novak, Jason Lollar, the Creamery and the U.K.'s Mojo Pickups are all good sources for contemporary interpretations of various cult classics, while Lindy Fralin is a longtime maker of the custom OEM gold-foils Joe Yanuziello uses in his guitars, as reviewed in our September 2020 issue's "New and Cool" department.



A Harmony H54 Rocket model with S-cover gold-foils, owned by Portishead guitarist Adrian Utley (detail at left)



Utley's Silvertone Bobkat sporting Rowe/DeArmond gold-foils with diamond cutouts

TECH SUPPORT

BY CRAIG ANDERTON

Better Compression

Keep your guitar signal lively with frequency-selective compression.

IT'S NOT SURPRISING if your acoustic guitar, or dry electric guitar, sounds a bit "dull" when its signal is compressed. Low frequencies are stronger than high frequencies, and they typically trigger a compressor to act upon the signal. When it does, high frequencies are compressed along with the lower frequencies that trigged the compressor. Although you can boost the high frequencies with EQ to regain what's been lost, a more natural solution is to compress only the lower frequencies (and reduce their gain somewhat), while leaving the higher frequencies uncompressed so that they ring out above the compressed sound.

Let's examine four main ways to do this and the pros and cons to each.

Multiband Compression Multiband compressors split the guitar signal into multiple frequency bands, each with its own compressor. You'll probably need only two bands — one for the highs and one for the lows. Solo the high-frequency band, and then adjust the crossover frequency that splits the high and low bands, so the high end retains the sparkle you want. Add the desired amount of compression to the low band, then balance its level with the high band. **Pros**: Multiband compressors are relatively easy to set up, and add EQ functionality. For example, you can use three bands and set the lowest band to frequencies below 100Hz or so. Then, rather than compressing the signal, lower its level to trim low-frequency muddiness. **Cons**: Multiband compressors draw more CPU power than standard compressors. This is particularly true of linear-phase multiband compressors, which are more accurate but may sound clinical compared to conventional processors.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT COMPRESSED" AND "LIVELY-SOUNDING" DON'T HAVE TO BE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

Compression With Internal Filter/Sidechain In this setup, the compressor's internal filter processes the guitar signal that triggers compression. If this filter reduces high frequencies, then only the remaining lower frequencies will trigger compression. **Pros**: Sidechain compressors typically have lower CPU consumption than multiband compressors and might have additional controls a multiband compressor lacks. **Cons**: The filter rolloff may not be steep enough to produce the desired result, and it can be difficult or impossible to vary the balance of the high and low-frequency components. Furthermore, not all compressors have this feature.

Parallel Processing Inside an Amp Sim or DAW. For example, Overloud's TH-U includes a crossover for splitting high and low frequencies, and Studio One's FX Chains can split audio into five frequency bands. With the Line 6 Helix, splitting the signal into two paths (one with a high-cut filter, the other with a low-cut filter) can restrict frequency ranges. **Pros**: This approach is easy to incorporate along with other processors in presets. **Cons**: However, it's more time-consuming to set up, and filter options may be limited.

Traditional Side Chaining. See **Fig. 1**. Assuming your compressor has a sidechain input, copy the guitar track. You won't listen to this track, but use it to drive the compressor's sidechain input. Insert an EQ in the copied track, and adjust the EQ's range to cover the frequencies you want to compress. Assign the copied track's output to the compressor's sidechain. **Pros**: This approach provides flexible filtering than the other options, and you can edit the guitar track driving the sidechain for additional effects. **Cons**: It usually requires two tracks and is a more complex setup.

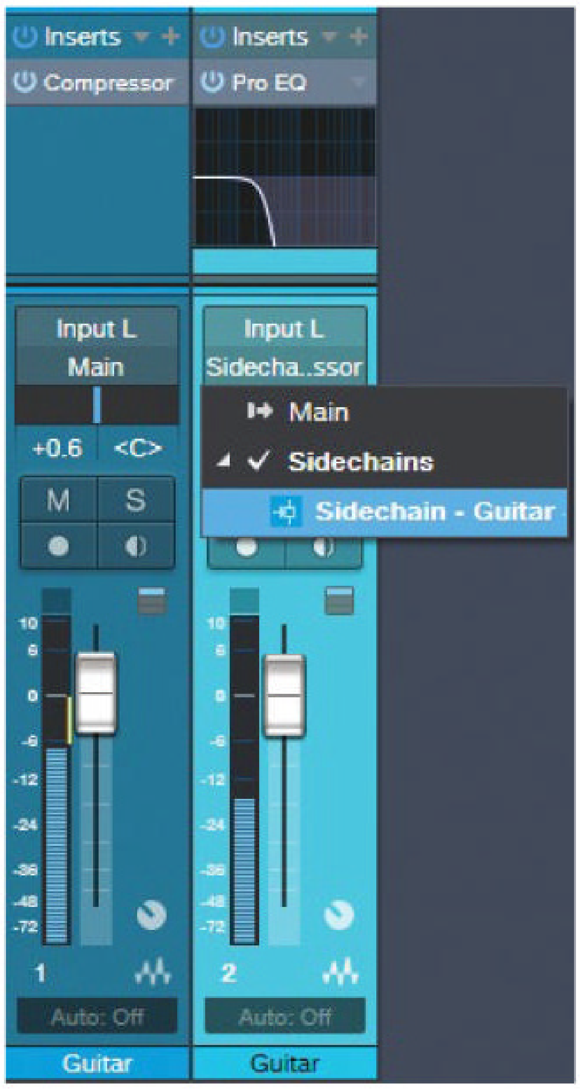


Fig. 1: Track 1 (L) is the main, compressed guitar track. The copied guitar in Track 2 (R) uses EQ to take off the highs. This signal triggers the compressor, so that only low frequencies are compressed.

The bottom line is that "compressed" and "lively-sounding" don't have to be mutually exclusive. Try frequency-selective compression, and find out for yourself.

Visit ***craiganderton.org*** *for more articles, videos and free downloads.*

BY JIM CAMPILONGO

Green Energy

Fleetwood Mac closed out the Peter Green era with an album for the ages.

I DON'T WANT to rock the boat, but to me Fleetwood Mac never meant Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham or the tedious media fascinations with the band members' relationship conflicts. To me, Fleetwood Mac meant one thing: *Then Play On* — one of the greatest blues-rock records ever made.

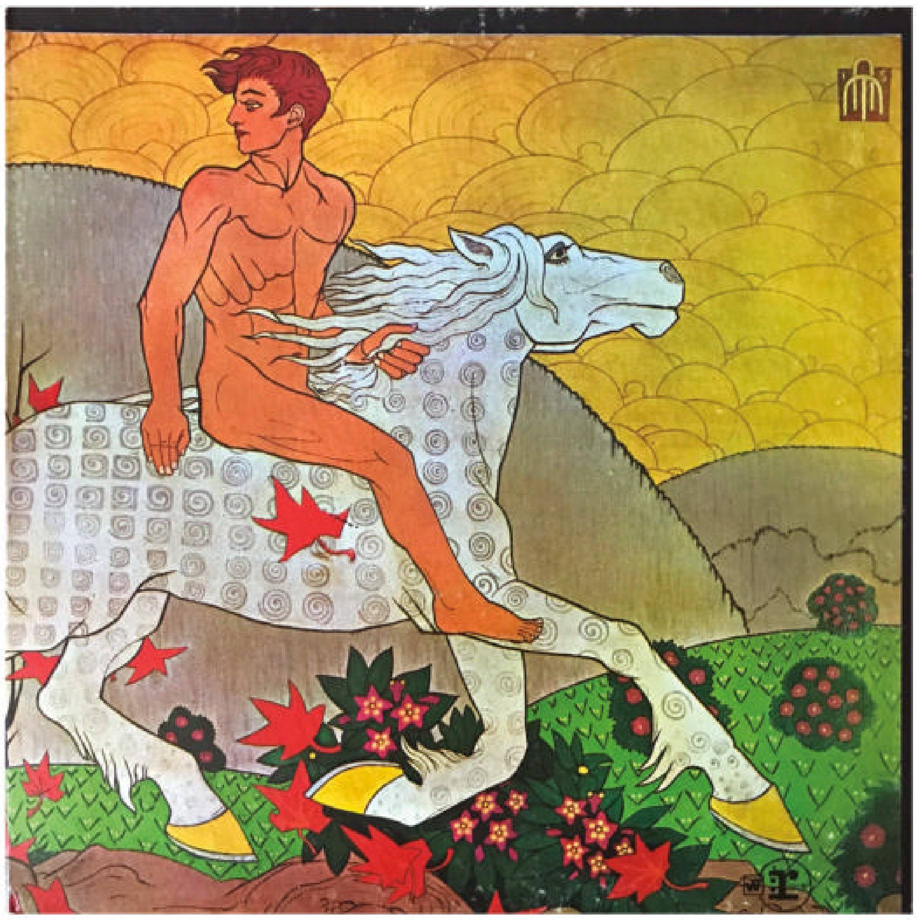
Then Play On was the group's third album, released on the Reprise label in 1969. This gatefold record is hard evidence of Fleetwood Mac's growth from an excellent blues band to a blues-based act that defied description. The group at this point featured Peter Green and Danny Kirwan, each on guitar and vocals, Jeremy Spencer (whose only contribution here is piano on "Oh Well"), and the world-class rhythm section of bassist John McVie and drummer Mick Fleetwood.

"Coming Your Way" opens the record with McVie and Fleetwood's trademark jungle beat. The song quickly reveals how the group has evolved since its 1968 debut, where it sounded more like a traditional blues band. We can hear its vocabulary expand into a language all its own. It's still blues, but with a new dialect. The song ends with a dramatic riff-rock passage that sounds like a precursor to the Beatles' "I Want You (She's So Heavy)." It's a stunning entrance to this great album.

"Oh Well," easily the best-known track here, actually entered the *Billboard* Top 100 chart and is memorable both for its insistent riff and blunt vocal refrain, "I can't sing, I ain't pretty and my legs are thin." Midway through, it abruptly shifts from a primal rocking blues vamp to a movement with echoes of an Ennio Morricone soundtrack that you might hear as a pair of gunslingers stare one another down in a duel.

IT PRIORITIZES FLEETWOOD MAC'S ABILITY TO CREATE TAUT VOCAL-LED TRACKS AND STUNNING INSTRUMENTAL WORKOUTS

"Rattlesnake Shake" is another masterpiece. The guitar tones epitomize evil, in the best possible way. (Isn't that what we all want?) Again, the rhythm section grinds away. The Peter Green vocal is spoken as much as it's sung, and it's as laser-direct as the guitars. Some vocalists have chops, but it feels like they're playing a role, and I don't believe in them. Green's vocal performances, on the other hand, always feel like a confession more than a performance.



Being drawn to instrumentals, I was most influenced by "Underway." The song is basically a vamp using the A major 6 chord on the 2nd fret: Just lay your first finger down and — *presto!* — you have 'Underway"! In high school, I found a live extended bootleg version of this song that changed my life. It's a reverb-laden sonic exploration, and a performance for the ages that ends with Green playing beautiful, stabbing melodies, long after the entire band has dropped out. That said, the album version is a nice rendition.

I'm impressed by how *Then Play On* prioritizes what I assume Fleetwood Mac wanted to show of themselves: their ability to create both taut, vocal-led tracks and stunning instrumental workouts. In between beautiful orchestrations and heart-wrenching vocals, performance pieces like "Searching for Madge" and "Fighting for Madge" shoulder their way into our listening experience. These are exciting, dripping-raw one-key jams, but their presence here feels seamless with the rest of the tracks. The group's commitment makes me believe in them. Side two ends with Green's "Before the Beginning," and his vocals and crying guitar performance are the perfect ending to an almost-perfect record.

Sure, *Fleetwood Mac* and *Rumours* are great albums that served up anthems for an era, but I can usually hear select cuts from those records while waiting at my bank machine, or at the grocery store. On the other hand, when I want to hear brilliant blues rock that never compromises and demands to be heard, I put *Then Play On* on my turntable and play it loud.

Look for Jim Campilongo and Luca Benedetti's new release, Two Guitars, *at cityhallrecords.com on CD and vinyl.*

PLAY WITH

FIRE

The Rolling Stones' 1969 American tour was a showcase for the group's new guitar tandem of Keith Richards and Mick Taylor. It made rock and roll shows bigger, louder and more spectacular than ever. But success came with a body count.

BY CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI

The Rolling Stones, 1970. (from left) Mick Taylor, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts and Bill Wyman

EAGLE ROCK/MONTREUX SOUNDS

LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES

Brian Jones at the June 1968 sessions for "Sympathy for the Devil," at Olympic Studios, London. By then, the guitarist was increasingly cut off from his bandmates.

IT MIGHT HAVE been the first rock and roll tour of any real consequence. Today, if it's remembered at all, it's usually for the body count left in its wake.

But Bill Wyman recalls the Rolling Stones' 1969 American tour for a different reason. "In 1969, they listened," the former Stones bassist says. "It was the first time that the audiences had actually listened to us."

Woodstock may be the musical event of 1969 that defined a generation, but the Rolling Stones' 1969 American tour set the standard for the future of rock and roll concerts. Launched in November of that year, a little more than two months after Woodstock, the cross-country jaunt isn't regarded with the same reverence as the festival. Fans know it as the tour captured on the 1970 release *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!*, the Stones' second live album and a favorite concert album among those who have sunk a needle into its grooves. But the group's U.S. hitch not only changed how rock and roll shows were presented — it also showed a new way to finance them and make a profit, opening the door to the barnstorming extravaganzas launched by artists like Led Zeppelin, Yes, Elton John and others in the 1970s and the decades that followed. It was, as Wyman notes, the start of a new time, when the fans stopped screaming and began to listen, as well as turn on and become immersed in the live-music experience.

Anyone who witnessed the British Invasion first-hand knows all too well how awful rock and roll concerts could be in the mid 1960s, when primitive sound systems were unable to project a band's music above the noise of the crowd. As a budding guitarist looking forward to a show from your favorite players, you'd have strained to hear their instruments, whose frequency range was well matched to that of the screaming girls. You'd probably have trouble seeing the band too. Under the glare of stage lights or spots, acts played with little to no staging — no set, no props, no lighting effects. As performances went, it was as rudimentary as it could be. After sitting through three or four opening acts, the band you'd shelled out your hard-earned allowance to see came onstage and played its hits for 20 to 30 minutes before abruptly departing.

The Rolling Stones certainly knew the drill. Their previous U.S. tour, in 1966, in support of their album *Aftermath*, opened in Lynn, Massachusetts, where 17,000 fans packed the Manning Bowl for the evening's entertainment. The outdoor show opened with the Mods, a local act who had won their spot through the promoter of a battle of the bands contest. They were followed by the McCoys, then riding high on their hit "Hang on Sloopy" and the Standells, the L.A. act whose breakthrough hit, "Dirty Water," celebrated Boston, Lynn's neighbor to the south. The Stones' set, consisting of a mere 10 songs, lasted just over 30 minutes. That was short enough, but the Manning Bowl show ended early when a rainstorm broke out. Teens stormed the stage, and the police responded with tear gas. The Stones escaped to their limos and fled. "It was a bit of an outdoor crazy," Mick Jagger recalls. "It wasn't well secured. A few people got a bit drunk. There were a few cops, and that was the end of it."

GET YER YA-YA'S OUT!
THE ROLLING STONES

★★★

"THE STONES ACTUALLY HADN'T PLAYED TOGETHER FOR A LONG TIME, SO WHEN I JOINED THEM IT WAS LIKE A NEW BEGINNING"

— MICK TAYLOR

"Things got a little blurry in the '60s," Keith Richards says. "Tear gas — that was the *other* continuous smell of the '60s. I can't say I miss it."

But by the decade's end, much had changed in music and the youth movement. Those screaming teens had grown up. Many were now out on their own, burning their draft cards, marching to protest the Vietnam War, experimenting with drugs and defining their own place in society. Rock and roll had evolved as well, with bands like the Beatles introducing elements of spirituality in their music, while groups like the Stones met social and political issues head on. Their 1968 hit "Street Fighting Man" had been embraced by youths in France, who fought in the streets of Paris that May for social reforms, and by young Americans protesting the Vietnam War at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago that August. Older and radicalized, rock and roll fans went to shows, smoked weed, or took something stronger, and actually listened to the music.

Unfortunately, the new arenas and civic auditoriums that began dotting the U.S. landscape in the latter half of the

KEYSTONE FEATURES/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

1960s weren't suited to rock shows. Vast, with seating for 10 to 20 thousand attendees, they were ill-equipped to handle musical events, their underpowered public-address systems designed for sporting events rather than sold-out concerts. Fans furthest from the stage weren't only deprived of the music — the performance itself looked like a distant skirmish under the floodlights.

Remarkably, England's Rolling Stones would provide the solution to this uniquely American problem. By 1969, nearly three years had passed since the group's 1966 tour, their last in the United States. At that time, they, along with the Beatles and Bob Dylan, made up pop music's Big Three. But the Beatles had stopped performing and were in the midst of breaking up, while Dylan was a recluse in Woodstock. Somehow, the Rolling Stones were still standing, and with a new guitarist in tow — John Mayall's young blues protégé Mick Taylor — they were ready to claim the field for themselves.

This time they wanted a spectacle — a show that was bigger and louder than before, with proper sound reinforcement and set design. They hired lighting designer Chip Monck — who lit Monterey Pop and as Woodstock's emcee warned the festival's flower children away from the "brown acid" — to create a set that they would haul from stage to stage. They brought their own P.A. system and mixing board, and drafted recording engineer Glyn Johns to run sound and record the shows. They didn't trust local promoters, so they chose their own opening acts, bringing along English guitarist and vocalist Terry Reid, and booking a trio of show-stopping American acts: the Ike & Tina Turner Revue, B.B. King and, a guitarist who was like a god to them, Chuck Berry. Significantly, the Stones booked every show themselves, eliminating middlemen and ensuring themselves maximum profits.

Above all, they wanted to perform. No more 30 minutes of hits. The 1969 American tour saw the Rolling Stones play for an average of 75 minutes each show, with many concerts lasting past midnight. Everything was designed to draw the audience into the act. Monck designed a proscenium stage backlit with lights that changed color to suit the songs' moods, and concealed the speaker towers by draping them in grey cloth. At the center of it all, on a purple carpet with a white starburst center, Mick Jagger led the Rolling Stones — Richards, Taylor, Wyman and drummer Charlie Watts — through the set like a ringmaster, dressed in black trousers with silver buttons down the legs, a metal-studded belt, a black scoop-necked jersey with a white Leo glyph on the chest, a flowing red scarf, and a red, white and blue Uncle Sam top hat.

The 1969 American tour didn't just reassert the Rolling Stones as a powerhouse rock and roll band — it also changed expectations of what a rock and roll show should be, how it should be run, and the production standards required. It's here that the modern music concert tour began. And it's here that the Rolling Stones' legend as "the greatest rock and roll band in the world" — as tour manager Sam Cutler introduced them each night — begins.

But getting to this point wasn't easy. By the time the tour launched on November 7, in Fort Collins, Colorado, one of the Stones' own would be in the grave. The jaunt itself would see Jagger and Richards slip further into hard-drug use. And when it was over in early December, a cloud of death hung over what should have been a celebration.

The Rolling Stones had always been one of rock and roll's most exciting live acts, but by 1969, they were rarely seen onstage anymore. Since the group's 1967 European tour, they had made one public appearance, at the 1968 *NME* Poll Winners Concert, not including their own Rock and Roll Circus concert from December 1968 before an invitation-only audience.

The reason was down to drugs. Jagger, Richards and Stones co-founder Brian Jones had all been charged with offenses. But whereas Jagger's three-month sentence for possession of amphetamine tablets was reduced to a conditional discharge — essentially an order to "keep your nose clean" — and Richards' conviction for allowing pot to be smoked on his property was overturned on appeal, Jones was not nearly so lucky. Police had discovered cannabis and hard drugs at the multi-instrumentalist's home during a raid in May 1967. The following May, while still on probation, he was arrested again after a second raid at his flat turned up hash. Jones was found guilty, but the judge, believing the jury prejudiced, refused to jail the guitarist and instead fined him £50, about $890 today.

Though Jones had avoided jail, his second drug bust made it impossible for him to get a U.S. work visa, dashing the Stones' hopes of touring in America. But his days with the group were already numbered. Though he had been the band's original leader, Jones' authority diminished once Jagger and Richards became a successful songwriting duo. As his drug use increased and his mental state became more fragile, Jones missed gigs and recording dates. A few years earlier, he and Richards had been among the tightest of guitar tandems. "Brian and Keith had this guitar thing like you wouldn't believe," Ian "Stu" Stewart, the band's co-founder and behind-the-scenes keyboardist, told Stanley Booth, author of *The True Adventures of the Rolling Stones*. "There was never any suggestion of a lead and a rhythm guitar player. They were two guitar players that were like somebody's right and left hands." But at least since the Stones' psychedelic-rock opus, 1967's *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, Jones had played guitar less frequently. On the group's followup, 1968's *Beggar's Banquet*, he contributed slide and acoustic guitar, Mellotron, tambura and sitar, leaving Richards to perform all the other guitar parts.

By the time the Stones began recording 1969's *Let It Bleed*, they didn't even expect Jones to attend the sessions. He showed up for the recording of "You Can't Always Get What You Want," asking Jagger, "What can I play?" "I don't know, Brian," Jagger replied. "What *can* you play?"

"I enjoyed his company, and I tried incredibly hard, in 1966, to pull him back into the group," Richards told *Rolling Stone* in 2010. "He was flying off. But my attempts to bring Brian back into focus were a total failure."

While the Stones could work around Jones in the studio, they couldn't do without a second guitarist onstage. They briefly considered replacing him for the U.S. tour with Eric Clapton, but in the end, the Stones faced up to the inevitable. On June 8, Jagger, Richards and Watts drove to Jones' home, Cotchford Farm, the former estate of *Winnie-the-Pooh* author A.A. Milne, to deliver the news. "Mick and I didn't fancy the gig," Richards wrote in his 2010 memoir, *Life*. "But we drove down together and said, 'Hey, Brian… It's all over, pal.'"

★★★

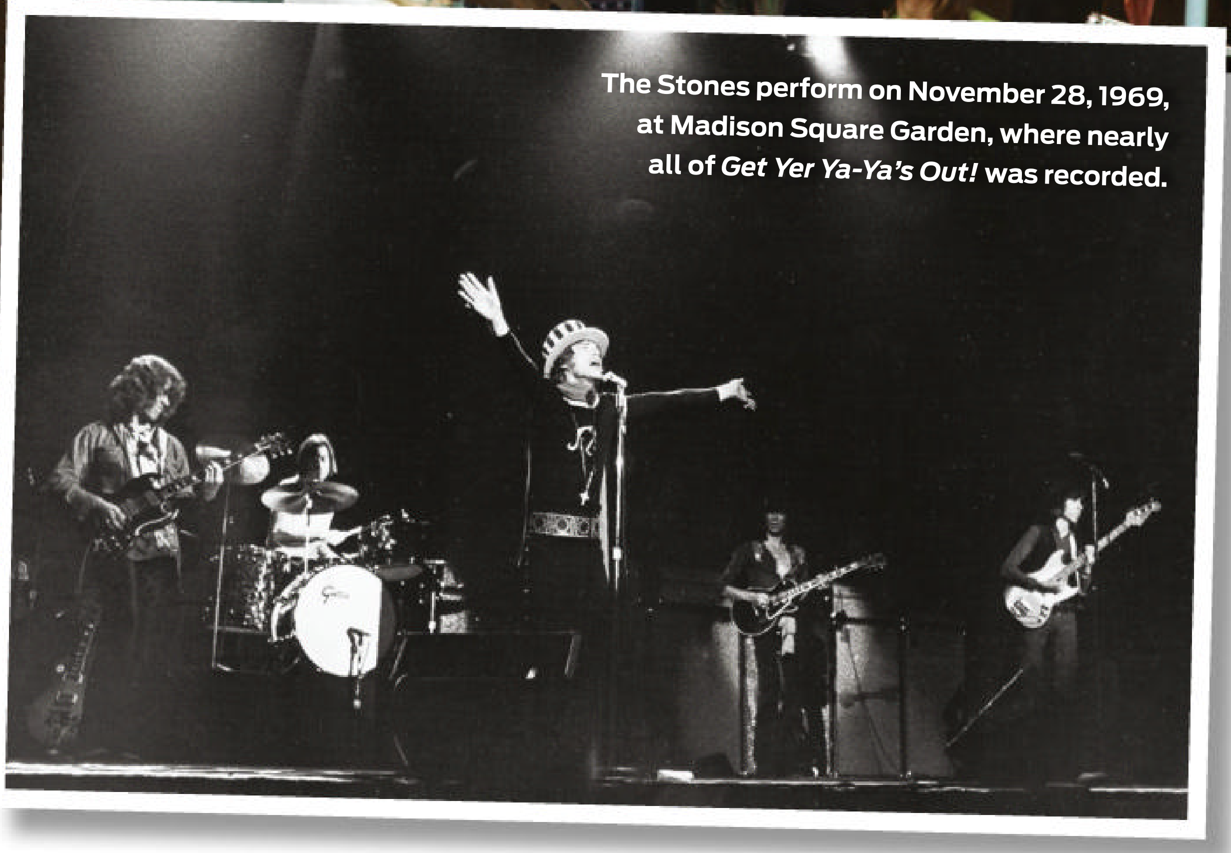
"I WAS IN AWE SOMETIMES LISTENING TO MICK TAYLOR. EVERYTHING WAS THERE IN HIS PLAYING"

— KEITH RICHARDS

By then, the Stones had found his replacement: 20-year-old Mick Taylor. Despite his youth, Taylor had already distinguished himself in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, taking over from Peter Green, Clapton's successor, in 1967, at the tender age of 18. A fine blues guitarist, Taylor was blessed with a jazzman's sensibilities, his remarkably melodic lead work streaked with shades of modal playing. It was Mayall and Ian Stewart who suggested Taylor to Jagger and Richards. Certainly, Richards knew Taylor — he'd sold him his 1959 Les Paul Standard back in 1967 when Taylor had joined the Bluesbreakers. The Stones had taken the young guitarist onboard even before they let Jones go: Though many sources pin the date to June 1969, Taylor's first recording with the Stones was on "Live With Me," which was

MIRRORPIX/GETTY IMAGES (HYDE PARK); MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (MADISON SQUARE GARDEN)

Taylor (left) debuts with the Stones at London's Hyde Park, July 5, 1969. (top right) Jagger and Richards, with Gibson Flying V, at the show



The Stones perform on November 28, 1969, at Madison Square Garden, where nearly all of *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!* was recorded.

recorded May 24, two weeks before Jones was fired.

"'Live With Me' was the very first track I ever played on," Taylor recalls, "when they were putting the finishing touches to *Let It Bleed*. We actually recorded that the night I went for my audition at Olympic Studios, or maybe the night after. I remember [*producer*] Jimmy Miller jumping up and down in the control room and getting all excited about how good it sounded, having two guitars playing off each other. Because I think they'd missed that with Brian Jones in the two-year hiatus since their last live performance. The Stones actually hadn't played together for a long time, so when I joined them it was like a new beginning. It was a new phase in their career. A new chapter."

To kick it off, the Stones had agreed to play a free concert in London's Hyde Park on July 5. The timing was good: Their new single, "Honky Tonk Women," featuring the lead guitar work of both Richards and Taylor, was scheduled to be released the day before. The Hyde Park concert would be an opportunity to show off their new lineup and put some publicity behind the song.

But the Stones' previous chapter was still being written. Sometime around midnight on July 2-3, Brian Jones was found dead in the swimming pool at Cotchford Farm. Before the sun had risen, the news made its way through the Stones' camp and into the morning news. Richards recalls that the band members were in the studio when they heard about it. "There exists one minute and 30 seconds of us recording 'I Don't Know Why,' a Stevie Wonder song, interrupted by the phone call telling us of Brian's death," he wrote.

Mick Taylor's arrival in the Stones marked the start of a new era and sound for the Rolling Stones. Though Jones was a talented guitarist, soloist and multi-instrumentalist, Taylor was in a different league. His muscular lead-guitar style fit their new blues-rock direction and brought a level of bravura to their ranks at a time when guitar virtuosity was on the rise in rock and roll. "I was in awe sometimes, listening to Mick Taylor," Richards wrote. "Everything was there in his playing — the melodic touch, a beautiful sustain and a way of reading a song."

Taylor's melodicism proved a perfect counterpoint to Richards' own recently adopted style. In March 1969, during the making of *Let It Bleed*, the group had recorded "Sister Morphine," a track destined for 1971's *Sticky Fingers*, with Ry Cooder playing slide. Richards was taken with Cooder's use of open-G tuning and adopted it as standard for his guitar work, eliminating his low E string in the process. "I met Ry in 1968, when he was hanging around with Taj Mahal and Jesse Ed Davis," Richards told Guitar.com. "Ry was using open G for slide. I saw him and thought, That's a really nice tuning. It restricts you so much: five strings, three notes, two fingers… one asshole!"

With their reconstituted lineup and tough new guitar sound, the Stones were eager to get back onstage. The fans were clamoring for it. Seven years into their career, the Stones sounded better than ever. Just as important, they were still relevant. As rock and roll's bad boys, they had always had an element of danger about them, but it was more overt on their newer material, like "Sympathy for the Devil," the *Beggars Banquet* opener, on which Jagger adopted Satan's persona to implicate humanity in the world's sins, placing the weight of social responsibility on the shoulders of the Stones' young radicalized listeners. On the album's flipside, "Street Fighting Man" offered a model for how to effect the change necessary to liberate a world stuck in the ways of the past and running headlong to its own destruction.

The Stones had won the love of politically minded youths with those songs, but Jagger glimpsed what was to come as early as 1967, when they played Warsaw, Poland, bringing rock and roll to Communist Eastern Europe. "Teenagers are not screaming over pop music anymore," he told Stanley Booth. "They're screaming for much deeper reasons. When I'm onstage, I sense that the teenagers are trying to communicate to me, like by telepathy, a message of some urgency. Not about me or about our music, but about the world and the way they live. And I see a lot of trouble coming in the dawn."

Jagger chats backstage with Chuck Berry.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

In September, the Stones began making plans for their month-long jaunt across America. Following an off-circuit gig on November 7 at Colorado State University's 8,745-seat Moby Gymnasium, the tour would commence in earnest. The itinerary would take the show from Los Angeles up to Oakland, across to Phoenix, down to Dallas and over to Alabama, before heading north to Chicago and east to Detroit, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York City and Boston, the final stop. As shows sold out in the larger cities, the Stones added second shows, though Mick Jagger, ever cautious about the cost, warned, "We won't play if there's a single empty seat."

The Rolling Stones wanted to control everything, from signing up and paying the opening acts to designing the production. "There was one minor problem, though," said Ronnie Schneider, the tour's manager. "We had no money, nothing." The William Morris Agency had signed on to book the tour, but the Stones' preeminence made its role moot. In the end, William Morris put up just $15,000 "to finance a half-million-dollar tour," Schneider says. "To pay for the construction of the set, the stage, the lights, to guarantee the acts, to do everything. It was a very funny moment."

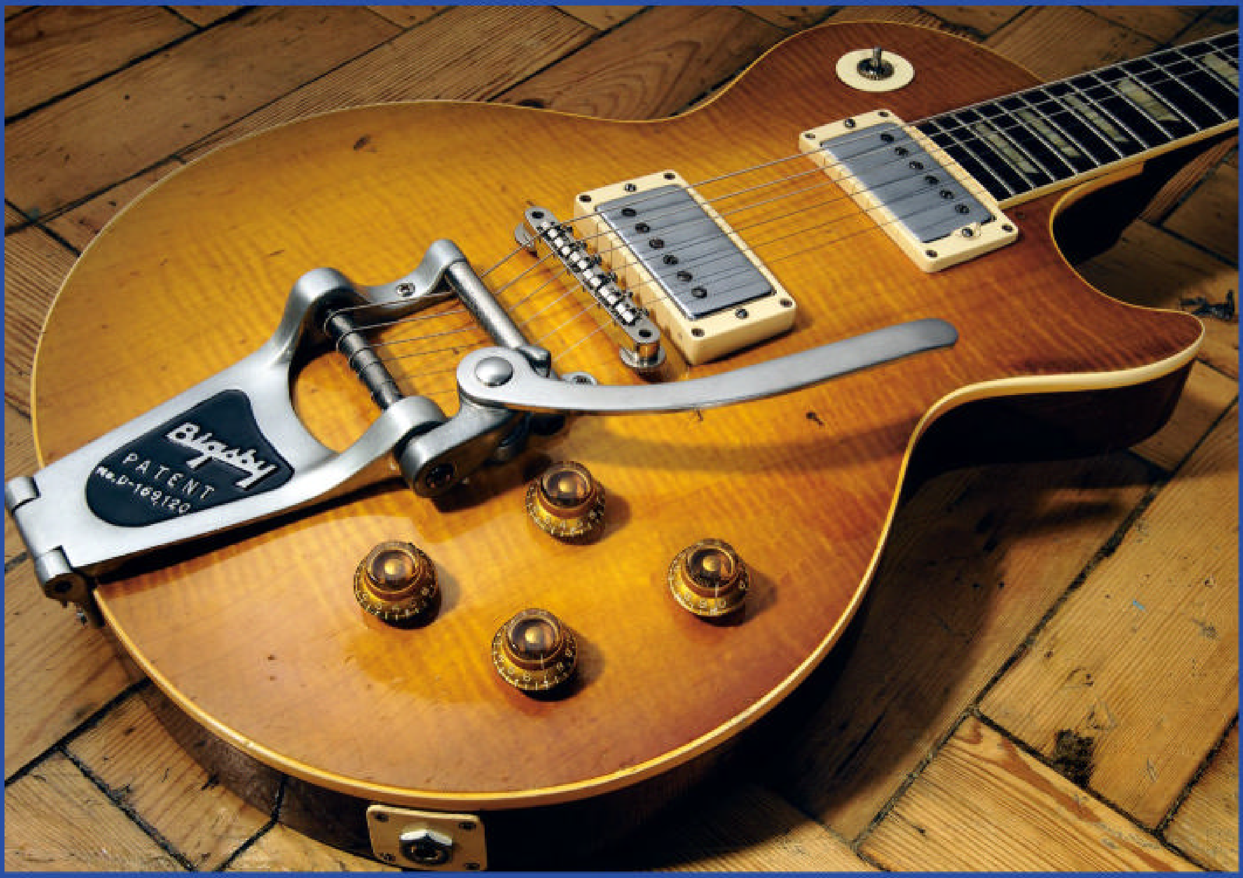
★★★

"I SENSE THAT THE TEENAGERS ARE TRYING TO COMMUNICATE TO ME A MESSAGE OF SOME URGENCY. AND I SEE A LOT OF TROUBLE COMING IN THE DAWN"

— MICK JAGGER

But Schneider came up with a solution that was revolutionary. In his scheme, the Stones — or rather, their new company, Rolling Stones Promotions — would receive, upfront, 50 percent of each venue's gross box-office receipts, which would be used to fund the tour. Jagger's insistence on sold-out shows wasn't about ego but to generate demand for future shows to keep the tour running. For the scheme to work, they'd need to sell out the first five dates. "Any problem with any of them and the shit was hitting the fan," Schneider said.

Not only did the gambit work — it changed how bands financed tours, allowing them to launch ever-greater spectacles. Schneider



JOBY SESSIONS

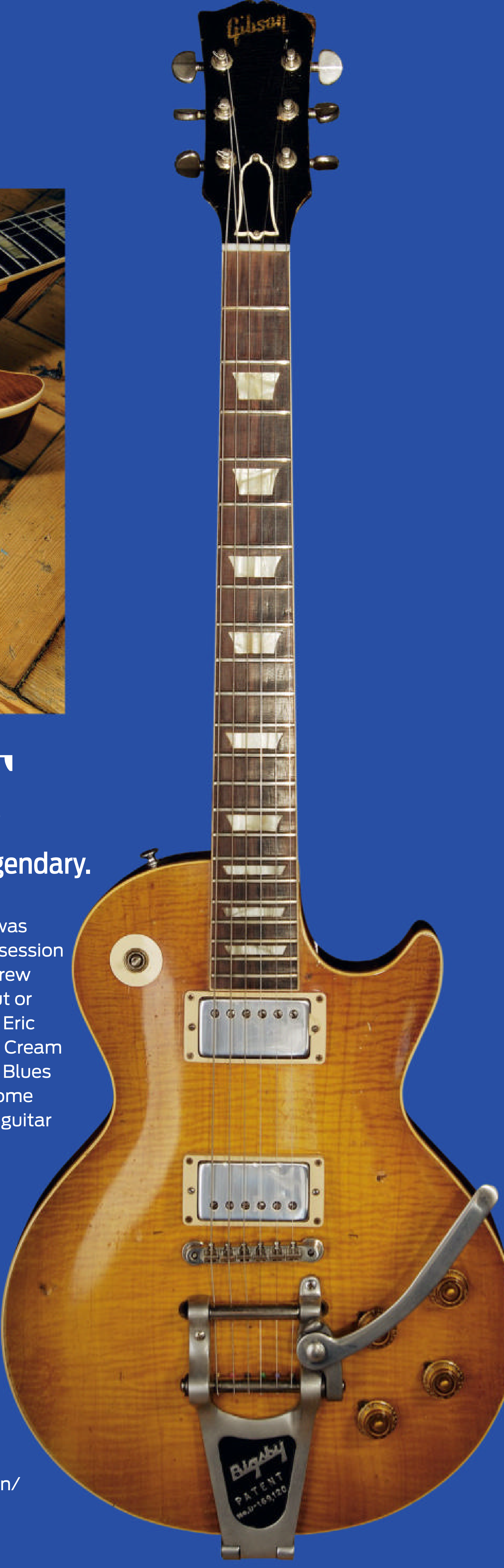
THE KEEF 'BURST

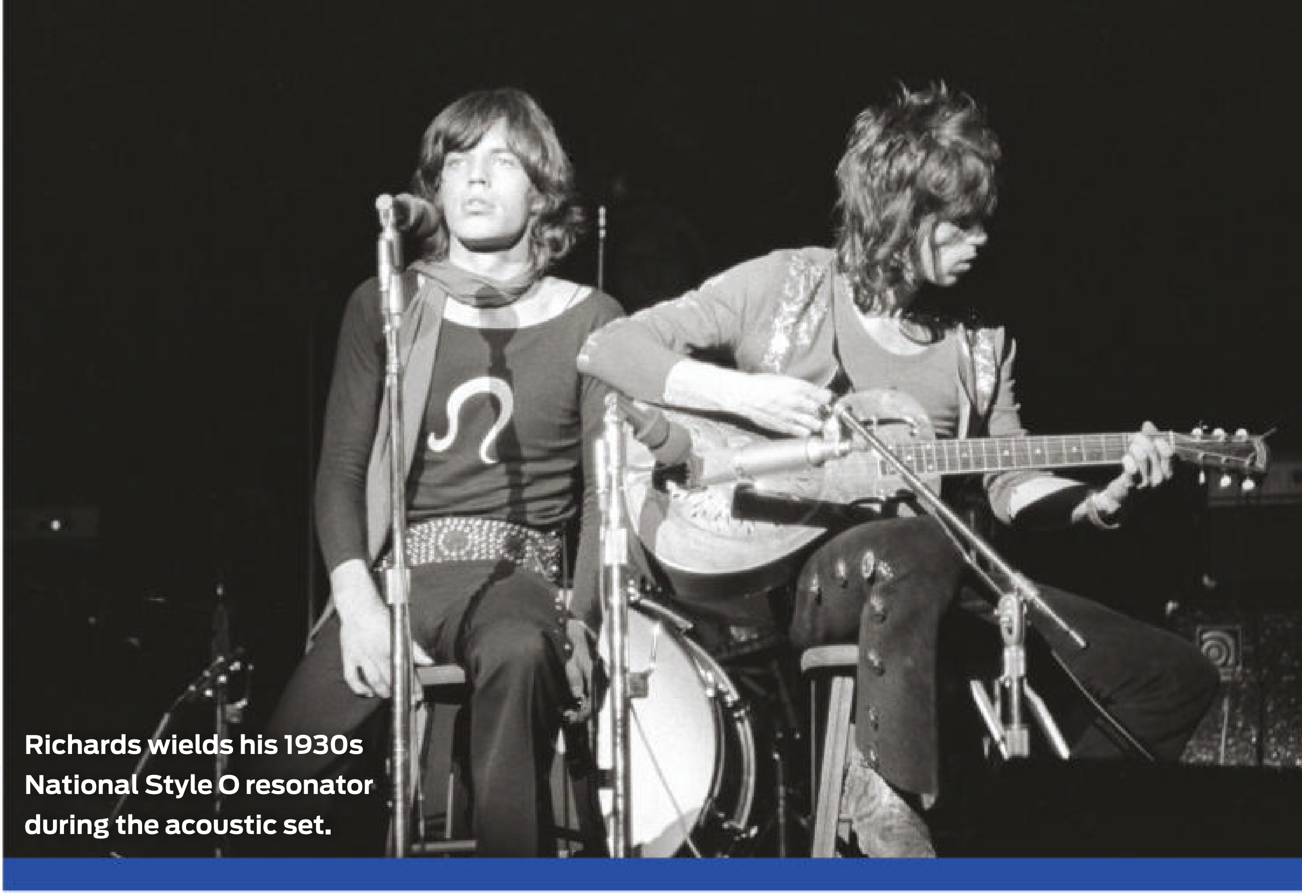
Owned by both Richards and Taylor, this LP Standard is legendary.

KEITH RICHARDS MAY not be renowned for the liquid blues improvisations that so many Les Paul players can boast, but he was unquestionably the first British rock star to embrace the then-discontinued Gibson solidbody. Richards was first seen using his 'Burst in 1964 on the Rolling Stones' second U.S. tour. More Les Pauls were added to his arsenal during the decade, only to be replaced with Telecasters in the 1970s, once he was fully into his bluesier style.

Richards bought this 1959 'Burst second-hand in London, in the latter part of August 1964. "It was my first touch with a really great, classic rock and roll electric guitar, so I fell in love with them for a while," he told *Guitar* magazine in 1997. The original owner, John Bowen, purchased the guitar — serial number 93182 — new in 1961 and had it fitted with an aftermarket Bigsby Vibrato. The guitar is easily identified by dark figuring near the cutaway on the top's lower bout. Jimmy Page was photographed with the guitar at a session for Stones manager/producer Andrew Loog Oldham, either checking it out or using it for the recording. Likewise, Eric Clapton borrowed the 'Burst when Cream played at the 1966 Windsor Jazz & Blues Festival. These appearances led some to speculate, erroneously, that the guitar had been owned by all three men.

Richards parted with the 'Burst in 1967, when he sold it to future Stones guitarist Mick Taylor, then performing with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. The guitar re-entered the Stones' world in 1969 when Taylor joined up, and it appeared on the 1969 American tour, where it was used for slide work, tuned to open G for "Honky Tonk Women" and open D for "Street Fighting Man." When last heard from, the Keith 'Burst resided with a musician/collector in Switzerland.





Richards wields his 1930s National Style O resonator during the acoustic set.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

also led the way by taking over managing rights related to all aspects of the tour, including posters, T-shirts and programs, eliminating freelance merchandisers and greatly improving the Stones' finances.

But all was not well in this new world of mega shows. Soon after the tour was announced, fans began to complain about the size of the venues and ticket prices. *Rolling Stone* noted that tickets for the Los Angeles Forum show ranged in price from $5.50 to $8.50, whereas the same arena had charged $3.50 to $7.50 for Blind Faith and $3.50 to $6.50 for the Doors. Writing in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *Rolling Stone* founding editor Ralph Gleason took the Stones to task for asking fans to pay more to see them perform in less-intimate settings. "Paying five, six and seven dollars for a Stones concert at the Oakland Coliseum for, say, an hour of the Stones seen a quarter of a mile away...says a very bad thing to me about the artists' attitude towards the public," Gleason wrote. "It says they despise their own audience."

Gleason's words stung the band. Confronted about the matter at the tour's first U.S. press conference, Jagger left the door open to playing a free concert when the jaunt was over. Weeks later, in New York City, he confirmed the group would headline a free show in the San Francisco area. Why San Francisco? "Because there's a scene there," Jagger replied. "And the weather's nice."

From London, the group flew to Los Angeles in October to begin rehearsing and preparing for the tour. Immediately, the members split into different residences. Bill Wyman and his wife rented a home, while Charlie Watts, with his wife and child in tow, stayed in a large hotel-like home on Oriole Street — dubbed Oriole House — where the group's entourage of staff members and handlers oversaw preparations for the tour. Jagger, Richards and Taylor found privacy at Stephen Stills' house in Laurel Canyon. The abode gave Jagger and Richards a place to work on tunes for the group's next album, and afforded Richards and Taylor a chance to work out their arrangements for the songs selected for the tour. The home's cramped coffin-shaped basement also doubled as the band's practice space. "We did some rehearsals," Wyman recalls. "We didn't do a lot. You know what the Stones are like. It was mostly party time."

Mick Taylor, new to this world, was shocked to find the Stones' sound so "ragged." "I thought, How do these guys make such great records when they're so sloppy and spontaneous? But it was because they had this great chemistry."

Developing the set list proved more difficult than they'd imagined. While the stylistic differences between the new guitar duo made for some great interplay — Richard's jagged double-stop riffing against Taylor's sinewy blues lines — it made playing most of the old hits impossible without some degree of reinterpretation. From the Stones' deep back catalog, only three songs — "Under My Thumb," "I'm Free" and "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" — were dusted off and recalibrated for the new lineup. Mostly, the band focused on their latest hit singles — "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Honky Tonk Women" — and cuts from *Beggar's Banquet* and the still-unreleased *Let It Bleed*. The bluesier country stylings of those albums gave Taylor plenty of room to stretch out and play bottleneck slide, something Jones was also adept at, though not with the same burning intensity. For good measure, they tossed in a couple of Chuck Berry standards — "Carol" and "Little Queenie" — to showcase Keith's driving double-stop riffs.

Unfortunately, Stills' basement was too small to hold rehearsals with full gear. Through their connections, the Stones secured an unused soundstage at Warner Bros. studio lot. The building chosen for them had served as the main set for director Sydney Pollack's 1969 Depression-era drama *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, starring Jane Fonda and Michael Sarrazin as a couple who compete in a grueling dance marathon for the chance to win $1,500. Though filming had been completed, the film's elegant 1930s-style ballroom set was still up when the Stones arrived. Above it hung a large scoreboard that, in the film, shows how many hours have elapsed in the marathon and the number of couples still standing. "How Long Will They Last?" read a legend at the top of the board. For the Stones, binging on drugs and rushing headlong into a tour for which they were unprepared, the question was perversely appropriate.

★★★

"WE DID SOME REHEARSALS. WE DIDN'T DO A LOT. IT WAS MOSTLY PARTY TIME"

— BILL WYMAN

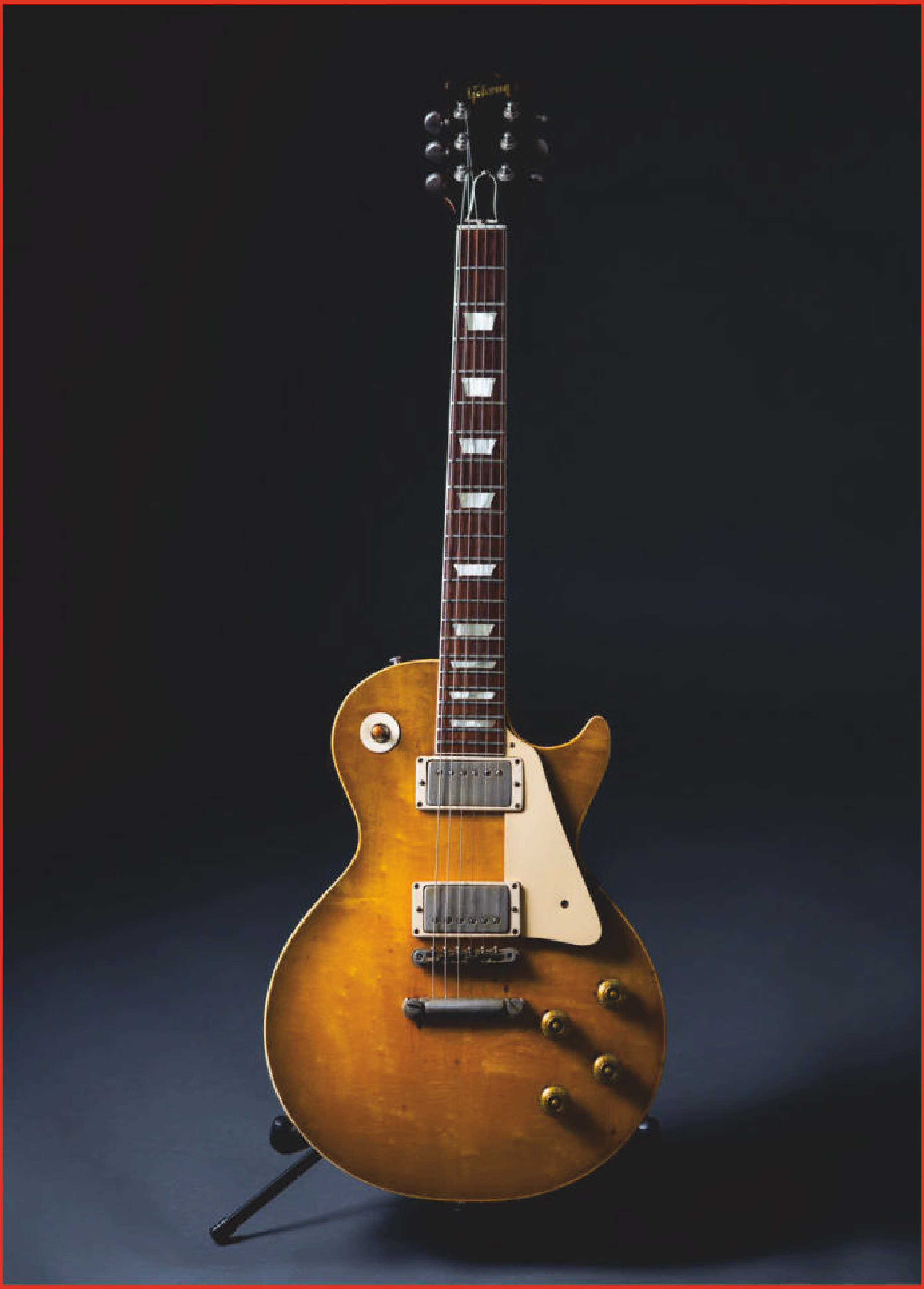
For the short tour, Richards and Taylor were well equipped with guitars and amps. According to gear expert Andy Babiuk, Richards' main

THE 'YA-YA'S' GUITAR

Mick Taylor's 1958 Les Paul 'Burst got a cover spot on the Stones' 1969 U.S. tour album.

MICK TAYLOR'S 1958 Les Paul Standard isn't the most famous example of that model, but as the 'Burst that Charlie Watts is holding aloft on the cover of *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!*, it's one of the most seen. Taylor revealed that the guitar had an aftermarket Bigsby B7 Vibrato when he purchased it, but he fitted the guitar with a factory-stock nickel-plated stop tailpiece, which is how it appeared during his tenure in the Rolling Stones, from 1969 to 1974. The guitar had its original Kluson keystone tuners at the time, but these were later changed out for Grovers.

As it happens, that isn't the only modification Taylor made. Apparently, he swapped out its double-black PAF pickups at some point. The guitar, which is now one of many Stones guitars in the collection of Hard Rock International, has been thoroughly inspected by Hard Rock guitar tech Kip Elder, who confirms the pickups currently in the guitar are not original. "We got a 10.2k-ohm reading for the bridge pickup, which typically registers about 8.5k," he told VintageGuitar.com. The guitar was frequently confused with the 1959 Keith 'Burst over the years, but Elder confirms that the first digit of its serial number is an eight.



Taylor played the guitar at the Stones' Altamont Speedway concert on December 6 and can be seen performing with it in a video for "Love in Vain," from the group's 1972 tour. (It can easily be identified by the screw holes left from the Bigsby.) Taylor still owned the guitar when *Guitar Player* interviewed him in the early 1980s, but Jeff Nolan, Hard Rock's director of memorabilia, says the company purchased it from him around that time. The finish has faded to a beautiful lemon 'burst since the guitar's heyday, but as Nolan attests, "It's an absolutely gorgeous example. I see so many 'Bursts in my job that I wanted to dislike this guitar. But it's so, so good. It's incredibly resonant, and the action is still perfect, even after all these years of not being in use."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HARD ROCK INTERNATIONAL

guitars were his prototype Ampeg Dan Armstrong Plexiglas [*see “Classic Gear,” July 2020*] and a 1958 Gibson Les Paul Custom he’d purchased earlier that year. His other guitars on the tour included his 1969 Gibson ES-355TD-SV stereo electric and the 1959 Les Paul Standard he’d sold to Mick Taylor in early 1967 [*see page 41*]. In addition, Richards brought a 1930s National Style O resonator, which he used when performing “Prodigal Son” and “You Gotta Move” with Jagger in the show’s short acoustic set, and a Martin D12-20, a dreadnought-sized 12-string, fitted with a DeArmond soundhole pickup.

As for Taylor, he mainly used his Cherry Red 1961 Gibson Les Paul SG, whose “sideways” tremolo unit he’d replaced with a Bigsby B-5. He also occasionally used the ES-355TD-SV and his ’59 ’Burst for slide, as well as his 1958 Les Paul Standard [*see page 43*].

For amps, both guitarists were provided an arsenal of Ampeg’s new prototype SVT — Solid Vacuum Tube — amps. The Stones had shipped their Hiwatts from England, but the amps were damaged after they arrived stateside. Ian Stewart, who recalled that the group had used an Ampeg B-15 Porta-flex “flip-top” amp in its early recording sessions, contacted the manufacturer in New Jersey, and the company quickly sent along a truckfull of SVT prototypes, along with some ST-42 4x12 guitar cabinets from Ampeg’s solid-state line. Designed as bass amps, the SVTs put out a whopping 300 watts, prompting Ampeg to place a warning label on early models. A dozen prototypes were built, most of which were loaned to the Stones. The Ampegs were first used when the group moved to the Warner Bros. soundstage, although photos from those sessions show Taylor using several Fender Twin Reverbs. On tour, he, like Richards, performed before an impressive wall of SVTs.

Unfortunately, the prototype SVTs hadn’t been field tested, making Richards and Taylor unwitting guinea pigs in the amp’s development. Ampeg sent a pair of techs to maintain them, along with five additional backup units. Not only were the amps not designed for electric guitar but Richards and Taylor were using two or three simultaneously. The techs would sit onstage, behind the amps, and watch the tube plates for signs of overheating, then swap out an amp before it blew. They weren’t always successful. At the Oakland Coliseum on November 9, the second date of the tour, Richards’ amp failed during the intro to “Jumpin’ Jack Flash,” the second song of the show. He and Jagger quickly switched to the acoustic portion of the set while the situation was remedied, but when Richards plugged back into the amp, it blew again, causing him to smash his Les Paul Custom in anger. The Grateful Dead, who were working with the Stones on arranging the free concert in San Francisco, came to the rescue by loaning their amps for the remainder of the show.

The tour was well received by fans and the press throughout its run, although critics noted early on that the opening acts — particularly B.B. King and the Ike & Tina Turner Revue — were remarkably more polished than the Stones. “At the beginning of the tour, the band was rusty,” Sam Cutler told photographer Ethan Russell for *Let It Bleed*, Russell’s photobook of the tour. “When I first called them ‘the greatest rock and roll band in the world,’ I meant it sarcastically. In a way, the slogan made them work harder right from the start.”

By the time the circus rolled into New York City’s Madison Square Garden for the November 27 and 28 dates, the Stones were deadly. It’s from these performances that the group culled the tracks for *Get Yer Ya-Ya’s Out!*, with one song — their affecting cover of Robert Johnson’s “Love in Vain” — taken from the November 26 show at Baltimore’s Civic Center.

★★★

“ALL OF MADISON SQUARE GARDEN ABOVE ME WAS MOVING. I WAS PETRIFIED”

— GLYN JOHNS

The Stones’ tough new sound and attitude are evident right from the album’s opening cut. “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” was the hot hit the band would have toured on had they been on the road when it was released in the summer of 1968. More than a year later, it was a hard-wearing fan favorite. The band plays it faster on the live album, and in the key of B, whereas the single sounds slightly flat of the key of B flat. And while, on the studio version, Bill Wyman holds down a pedal point on the verses, he plays along with the guitar riff on the live cut, eliminating the single’s hip-swinging groove and making the song a foot-stomping blues-rock, a genre shift underscored by Taylor’s delicious climbing lead lines on the song’s chorus.

Taylor mostly lays back on the next track, Berry’s “Carol,” giving Richards room to display his classic rock and roll chops. Though he mostly shadows Richards’ rhythm work, the young guitarist steps out on the song’s signature riff, playing bluesy descending lead lines that add interest.

He gets a chance to show his stuff on “Stray Cat Blues,” squeezing fast, stinging lead lines from his guitar during the song’s numerous instrumental breaks. This funky *Beggar’s Banquet* cut gets new life here. Taken at a slower and bluesier pace, and with a less busy arrangement, the live version draws much of its power from Jagger’s sexually charged vocals. His singing on the studio version is loose and strung out, but on the live album he taunts, pleads, threatens and reprimands as he expounds on his proposition, imbuing it with a menacing authenticity the studio version lacks. The fact that the song is about seducing a child — 15 years old on *Beggar’s Banquet*, reduced to 13 in concert — makes his aggressive performance all the more disturbing.

Jagger swings his belt during "Midnight Rambler."

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor's first big moment in the spotlight comes on "Love in Vain," where he switches from his Les Paul SG to his 1959 'Burst and takes up his slide. The Stones recorded this Robert Johnson track for *Let It Bleed* earlier that year, adapting it as a country blues, complete with mandolin, but here it takes on a worn-in urban melancholy, demonstrating how far they'd already progressed as interpreters of classic blues. The sessions for that album were not far behind them, but on this November 26 evening in Baltimore, they sound like they've endured miles of hard road. The next night, backstage at Madison Square Garden, Jagger would learn that his girlfriend was leaving him and his lover was pregnant with his child, but in Baltimore he sings the tune as if he's had a vision of the trouble ahead. Richards' lovely, arpeggiating guitar work sets the mood for the singer's lament, but it's Taylor who expresses the song's loss and anguish in his slide work, each perfectly chosen and articulated note dancing along its nerve. Simply stellar, "Love in Vain" is one of the best representations of the Rolling Stones' power as a live act at this stage in their career.

From there, it's on to what has to be the definitive version of "Midnight Rambler." The song was unknown to audiences at the time, but at Madison Square Garden they responded reflexively to its shifting moods and momentum, demonstrating how completely the Stones had them in their hands. Mid-song, the band breaks down the beat, giving Richards and Taylor an opportunity to trade-off licks while Jagger scats. The crowd is amped up, howling, needing an outlet for its agitation. And it comes: "Well, you've heard about the Boston —" Jagger snarls, and the band slams the downbeat, prompting one amazed fan to cry out, "God-*damn!*" During the song, Jagger would take off his studded belt and use it to whip the stage, "The moment you saw the belt fall, you could actually hear the crowd go, 'Ahhh!'" Chip Monck recalls. "That's when you know you got it. That's when it's real." The song rides out on Taylor's insistent riffing, and by the time it's over, nine minutes after it began, the exhausted audience is roaring for more.

As with "Midnight Rambler," a crowd member gets a cameo on "Sympathy for the Devil," with a stoned female fan calling insistently for an oldie but goodie. "'Paint It Black'! 'Paint It Black,' you devil!" she demands in vain as the Stones kick into their *Beggar's Banquet* hit. The sinewy Latin feel of the original is abandoned for a boogie-rock rhythm that's more in keeping with the show's road-worn vibe. Richards plays his lead lines with a cocaine-fueled itch, relying on nerves and muscle memory as he builds the song to its first peak. From there, Taylor steals the show, testing the water with country-blues riffs before cutting loose, to the obvious satisfaction of Jagger, who yells his approval and relinquishes the spotlight to the young guitarist. Taylor has one of his finest moments on "Sympathy for the Devil," lifting the song to new heights.

Richards turns in his signature riffing and lead work on "Live With Me," the standout *Let It Bleed* track that marked Taylor's debut with the group. The Stones attack the song with fury and efficiency, driving its irresistible rhythm with a solid performance that goes straight for the jugular. From there, it's onto the second Chuck Berry song of the night, "Little Queenie," a fun, midtempo rocker that the Stones dispatch with druggy punk attitude. Watts has trouble finding the "one," and Richards' can't seem to shake off the riff nagging in his fret hand. Ian Stewart's boogie-woogie piano lines and Jagger's playful delivery carry the song aloft, but it's an otherwise uninspired turn. Likewise, "Honky Tonk

At Madison Square Garden. Founding Stones member and pianist Ian Stewart, in white tux, is at far left, with tour photographer Ethan Russell.

Women," the Stones' most recent hit and certainly a standout moment in the band's 1969 set, is played too strictly to the original recording, and too slow at that. The same can't be said of the album's thunderous closing track, "Street Fighting Man." Like "Jumpin' Jack Flash," it's stripped of its pop pretensions and flayed with proto-punk fury, the Stones riding it like a tank over enemy lines and flattening everything in its path.

Throughout the show, Glyn Johns sat in a rented Hertz truck three floors below Madison Square Garden, at ground level, capturing every moment of the shows on tape. "I was in the truck," he recalls, "and at one point — probably at the end of the show — I thought there were people stomping on the roof, because the whole bloody truck was bouncing up and down.

"So I jump out and I look around. But there's nobody on top of the truck. The whole building, all of Madison Square Garden above me, was moving. I was petrified."

Had the Rolling Stones headed home after the tour wrapped in Boston, the furor over ticket prices likely would have died down, snuffed out by the release of *Let It Bleed* one week later, on December 5. Instead, they spent their last week in America making nice with their fans and recording tracks for their next album at Muscle Shoals.

The first stop was the West Palm Beach International Music and Arts Festival, on November 30, in Jupiter, Florida. The Sunshine State's attempt at a Woodstock-style event, the festival featured Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin, Sly and the Family Stone, the Byrds and several other rock groups, with the Stones scheduled as the closing act.

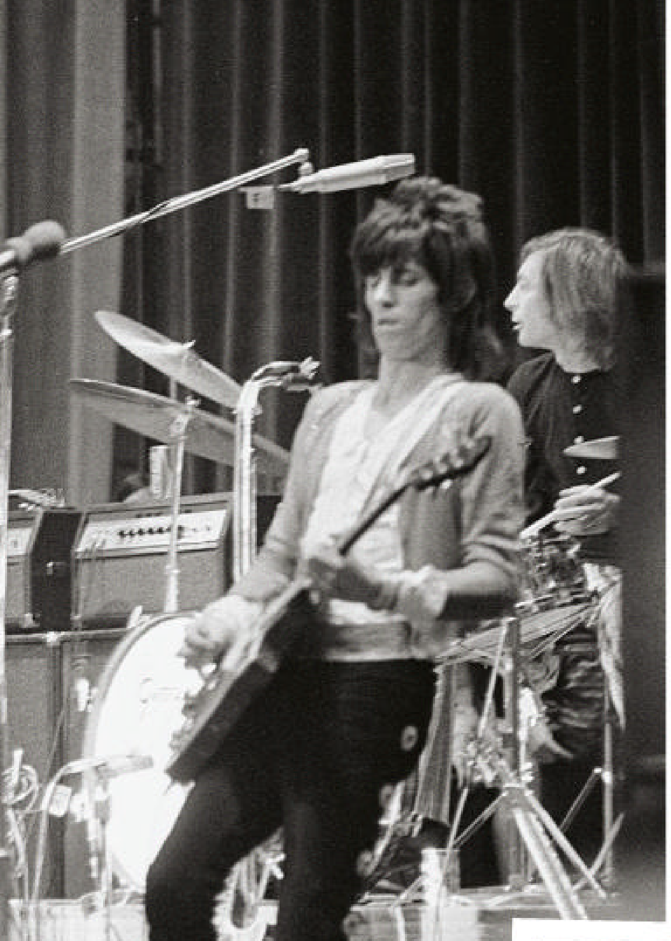
Rain and a badly timed cold front made the event uncomfortable for fans, and transportation issues delayed the Stones' arrival by 11 hours. They finally took the stage at 4 a.m.

From Florida, the group headed to Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in Sheffield, Alabama, hoping to capture some of their newfound fire on tape. Over three days, they cut three tracks — their new songs "Wild Horses" and "Brown Sugar," along with the traditional Black spiritual "You Gotta Move" — all of which were destined for their next studio album, 1971's *Sticky Fingers*.

And then it was onward to San Francisco and the Saturday, December 6 free concert they'd been railroaded into headlining. From the start, the organizers had trouble finding a location. San Jose State University's practice field, the site of an earlier three-day free festival, was selected, but the city, still reeling from that event, refused to issue the necessary permits. Golden Gate Park was up for consideration, but an NFL football game at Kezar Stadium, situated in the park, on the same day made the location unsuitable. Sears Point Raceway, in Sonoma, was selected, but the venue's owner, the television and film production company Filmways, Inc., wanted the Stones to put up $300,000 cash as a deposit. The company also demanded distribution rights for a concert film of the event.

On December 4, with just two days to spare, the Altamont Raceway, in Tracy, 70 miles east of San Francisco, was selected. The festival would open with West Coast groups — Santana, Jefferson Airplane, the Flying Burrito Brothers, the Grateful Dead and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young — while the Stones served as the closing act. With memories of Woodstock still fresh, the organizers anticipated a peaceful concert, which is perhaps why no one thought it a bad idea to hire members of the Hells Angels motorcycle club to help out. The Jefferson Airplane and Grateful Dead had suggested having them on hand, and the Stones concurred. It probably helped that they had enlisted a British group of motorbike fans called the Hells Angels to provide security the previous June at their Hyde Park show, where Mick Taylor made his official debut as a member of the band. For the promise of $500 in beer, the Hells Angels agreed to keep fans from climbing onto the Altamont's makeshift stage, which was just one meter high, and provide assistance to attendees, such as giving directions to bathrooms and medical tents.

The concert started out fine, with Santana turning in an inspired set. But as the day progressed, the Angels got drunker, while the young attendees grew more stoned and unruly. The bikers frequently waded into the throng, swinging fists, pool cues and motorcycle chains, to drive back fans or take down



Bad vibes at Altamont.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (MADISON SQUARE GARDEN); ROBERT ALTMAN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (ALTAMONT)

flailing, strung-out revelers. When Jefferson Airplane's Marty Balin attempted to break up a scuffle, one of the Angels punched the singer, knocking him out. The Grateful Dead had been scheduled to play between CSN&Y and the Stones, but when they arrived and learned what had happened to Balin, they panicked and fled.

By the time the Stones went on, darkness had fallen and some 5,000 fans were swarming the front of the stage. Jagger, who'd been punched in the face by an attendee when he first arrived, implored the crowd to "cool out." They began playing "Sympathy for the Devil" but stopped when the Angels launched another skirmish.

"The violence was incredible," Richards recalls. "I thought the show would have been stopped, but hardly anybody wanted to take any notice."

The Stones continued to play, having little recourse and hoping the performance would keep the crowd from becoming more chaotic. They launched into "Under My Thumb," but as Jagger began singing, another fight broke out. A young man in a lime-green suit was seen tangling with some Hells Angels, when he suddenly pulled a revolver from his jacket. The bikers descended. Hells Angel Alan Passaro reportedly stabbed the man five times with a large knife, while the others stomped him and left him to die. Attendees carried his limp body to a medical tent, but 18-year-old Meredith Hunter succumbed to his injuries, one of four people who died that day at Altamont.

After the shock of Altamont, the Rolling Stones had given little thought to releasing an album from their U.S. jaunt. But in December, shortly after the tour's conclusion, a bootleg of their troubled November 9 Oakland Coliseum show began making the rounds at head shops and independent record stores. Titled *Live'r Than You'll Ever Be*, it was one of the earliest commercially sold bootleg albums, along with *Kum Back*, featuring session recordings from the Beatles' yet-unreleased *Let It Be* project, and *Great White Wonder*, offering uncollected recordings of Dylan's performances from 1961 through his 1967 sessions with the Band. The Stones' bootleg sold very well, which may have influenced the group to release a concert record of its own. Ethan Russell, the tour's trusted photographer, was hired to shoot its cover. He created a still life consisting of Jagger's Uncle Sam top hat and various other elements of his stage costume, along with his passport and odds and ends. Prominently positioned on the hat's brim was a fat white joint. Jagger, still smarting from the band's drug busts, looked at the photo in disbelief. "Didn't you shoot any without the joint?" he asked. Russell had not.

In early February, Charlie Watts was dispatched to a section of the M6 motorway in Birmingham, England, along with a donkey and pieces of the Stones' gear, including Keith Richards' Ampeg Dan Armstrong guitar and Mick Taylor's 1958 Les Paul 'Burst. He was photographed in his white stage clothes, wearing Mick Jagger's top hat, and leaping into the air while holding the guitars aloft. Shot by David Bailey, the photo was inspired by the line "Jewels and binoculars hang from the head of the mule," from Dylan's "Visions of Johanna." On Watts' T-shirt, an image of a woman's bare breasts provided a visual reference for the album's title, itself derived from the Blind Boy Fuller tune "Get Your Ya Yas Out," though in Fuller's song, *ya yas* is a euphemism for *ass*. The Stones, as always, had no qualms about pushing the limits.

Released on September 4, 1970, *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!* quickly became a hit, reaching Number One in the U.K. and Number Six in the U.S., where it eventually went Platinum. Critics praised it, with *Rolling Stones'* Lester Bangs saying, "I have no doubt that it's the best rock concert ever put on record." But for all its success, *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!*, along with the tour that gave birth to it and the innovations the Rolling Stones brought to rock and roll's live music scene, lie in the shadow of what Keith Richards called "the terrible murder going on in front of us."

"Altamont," he said in 1971. "It could only happen to the Stones." ■

Peter Green performs with Fleetwood Mac at the Royal Albert Hall, London, April 22, 1969.

OCTOBER 29, 1946 – JULY 25, 2020

PETER GREEN

The SUPER-NATURAL

A singer, songwriter and leading guitarist in Britain's 1960s blues boom, **Peter Green** possessed otherworldly tone and talent. In this previously unpublished 2003 interview, he discusses his life and music, and the demons that short-circuited his promising career.

BY ELLIOT STEPHEN COHEN

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Green and B.B. King in the studio during the recording of *B.B. King in London*, 1971.

WHEN THE GUITARIST known as the King of the Blues says, "He has the sweetest tone I ever heard. He was the only one who gave me cold sweats," you know it's high praise. And that's exactly what B.B. King said about the late Peter Green, who passed away on July 25.

A major figure in the late-1960s British blues boom, Green was considered by many to be the best electric blues guitarist of his time. "Peter in his prime in the '60s was just without equal," said John Mayall, who hired him as the Bluesbreakers' guitarist when Eric Clapton left to form Cream. For a few years it seemed Green would be among a small group of guitarists to shape the direction of blues-rock. He formed Fleetwood Mac in '67, but their success was short-lived for the young guitarist. By 1970, his mental health had begun to deteriorate, fueled by excessive drug use. By the decade's end, he was a casualty of the rock era. "I was very critically ill for a while there, you might say," he told *The Los Angeles Times* in 1998. "I'm not really back yet."

He was born Peter Allen Greenbaum on October 29, 1946, in Bethnal Green, North London. When he was 10, an older brother brought home a guitar, and Green had found his calling. He developed quickly on the instrument, becoming a formidable player. He was just 19 in 1966, when Mayall hired him. Despite Clapton's legendary status, Green proved a very worthy successor both onstage and on record, contributing stellar guitar work with his iconic 1959 Gibson Les Paul Standard fed through a Marshall amp on Mayall's revolutionary *A Hard Road* album. (The guitar, dubbed Greeny, was purchased by Metallica's Kirk Hammett in 2014 for an undisclosed sum.) Green made his vocal debut on two of the album's tracks, "You Don't Love Me" and "The Same Way," and was featured on a pair of instrumentals: a cover of Freddie King's "The Stumble" and his own composition, "The Super-Natural." The latter track demonstrated not only Green's distinctive tone with his '59 'Burst but also his beautifully quivering vibrato and ability to sustain notes for up to 10 seconds using harmonic feedback.

But his time with Mayall was short. In 1967, he formed his own band, Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac, featuring Jeremy Spencer (a brilliant 19-year-old guitarist many considered Green's equal), bassist Bob Brunning and drummer Mick Fleetwood, who had been fired by Mayall. The lineup solidified when John McVie, another Mayall alumni, replaced Brunning. With the addition of Danny Kirwan the following year as a third guitarist, the band's name was shortened to simply Fleetwood Mac. A series of British hits soon followed: "Black Magic Woman," "Oh, Well," "The Green Manalishi (With the Two Prong Crown)," "Man of the World" and "Albatross," which George Harrison acknowledged was the inspiration for the Beatles' *Abbey Road* track "Sun King." Remarkably, that year, 1969, Fleetwood Mac sold more singles in Britain than the Beatles and the Rolling Stones combined.

But amid the group's rise, Green began consuming prodigious amounts of LSD and mescaline. He grew a beard, performed in long white robes with a crucifix, and expressed disillusionment about fame and money, while his behavior on- and offstage became increasingly erratic. After a May 1970 concert, he walked away from the band that he had started. Things went from bad to worse over the next years. In 1977, when Fleetwood Mac's most commercially successful lineup was enjoying massive popularity with *Rumours*, Green, suffering from schizophrenia, was in a psychiatric hospital undergoing electroconvulsive shock therapy.

Following his release, the guitarist was never really able to get his career back on track, even after his old friend, guitarist Nigel Watson, convinced him in 1997 to join forces in a new band they called the Peter Green Splinter Group. The band released eight albums in less than seven years, but received little attention. It was readily apparent to anyone attending the band's shows that promoters were only using Green's name to sell tickets. Watson, in addition to doing all the singing, was providing the lead guitar work, with Green not contributing much musically.

When I spoke with Green for this interview in 2003, around the release of his record *Reaching the Cold 100*, he expressed regret for his drug use and spoke vividly of one harrowing incident. "I was still taking LSD one night before I left my house and smashed a car windscreen with a jar," he said. "I was hearing voices. I wanted them to stop, but they wouldn't stop. I blamed the drugs for what I did. That's what happens when you take LSD. Your mind plays tricks on you when you're hallucinating. But that's all in the past now."

Despite his years in the wilderness, Green was never forgotten. When Mick Fleetwood launched an all-star tribute concert for him at the London Palladium this past February 25, prominent musicians and longtime admirers of his playing and music — including Pete Townshend, Billy Gibbons, David Gilmour, Bill Wyman and Mayall — turned out to pay homage to the guitarist, who had done so much for blues. Sadly, Green was too ill to attend.

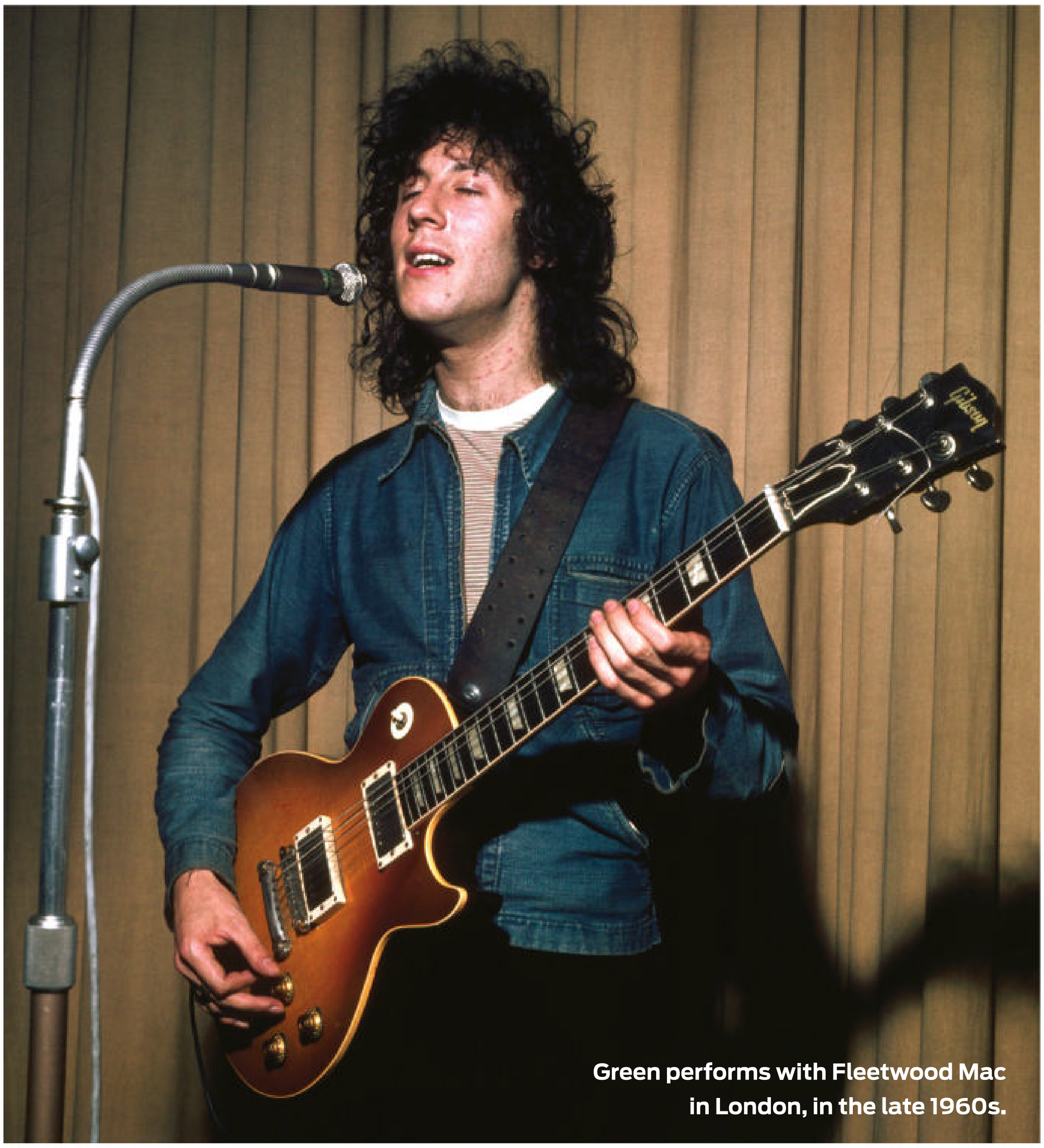
"I WAS CRITICALLY ILL FOR A WHILE THERE. I'M NOT REALLY BACK YET"

Reading this unpublished interview again after so many years reminded me of Peter Green's innate ability to charm and give generously, qualities that were equally obvious in his music.

ESTATE OF KEITH MORRIS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Green poses with his 1959 Gibson Les Paul Standard in the late 1970s.

GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



Green performs with Fleetwood Mac in London, in the late 1960s.

GEORGE WILKES/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Peter, what was the first music you heard as a boy that really inspired you?
My brother used to bring home these skiffle records. One that we really liked was "Freight Train" by Chas [*McDevitt*] and Nancy Whiskey, but Lonnie Donegan was the real king of skiffle. I loved the way he played his guitar and thought I should have a go at it. My brother gave me a guitar, an old Spanish hand-me-down. I didn't know any chords. I was just strumming the thing open. I didn't even know how to tune the guitar properly. I would just tune it in some way that appealed to my ear. Just made up my own chords. I played the strum over with my right hand, and with my left hand would just hold the neck someway comfortably, but I wouldn't put my finger on the fretboard yet. I first learned how to strum, or "jang," as I used to call it.

At what point did you feel accomplished enough to play out where people could hear you?
When I got a little older, my family moved to Putney, which I was very pleased about, because it was a big upgrading from the flats we used to live in. Here, there were orchids around the building, and apple and pear trees that we could eat off of. Most days I'd go down the street, and I would take my guitar and stand on the pavement side of the roadside of the building, just "janging" — just standing there with a big smile on my face.

You've cited Hank Marvin of the Shadows as a big early guitar hero of yours. What was it that most appealed to you about his guitar playing?
That slinky sound. He had this gorgeous Fiesta Red Stratocaster, and he would get this very special Stratocaster sound from it. What I especially liked was the way he was very gentle with the tremolo arm. It was the coming of the use of the tremolo arm.

"IF YOU'RE COMFORTABLE IN LIFE, I THINK THE BLUES MIGHT EVADE YOU. SUFFERING IS SOMETHING HOLY"

When did you start learning to play the electric bass?
At the time I was a young man, maybe only 17, if that, and I was still working part-time in the daytime as a French polisher, but in the evenings I was playing bass guitar with a group called the Muskrats. The guys lived halfway towards Richmond, in Sheen, so that's where we would hold our rehearsals. I would also go watch the Yardbirds rehearse, and I started copying and learning from Paul Samwell-Smith, who was playing bass for the original version of the Yardbirds that Eric Clapton was in. I soon discovered that I could hold my bass the way the Yardbirds used to hold their guitars. This got me into some sort of really strange moods.

Do you recall an early meeting with John Mayall?
Yes. One day I went over to John's house to apply for the job in such a way as to get it. John set his guitar aside and started playing the piano, while I played along with him. We recorded it, played it back, and it sounded fantastic. Absolutely lovely. The blues sounded absolutely gorgeous.

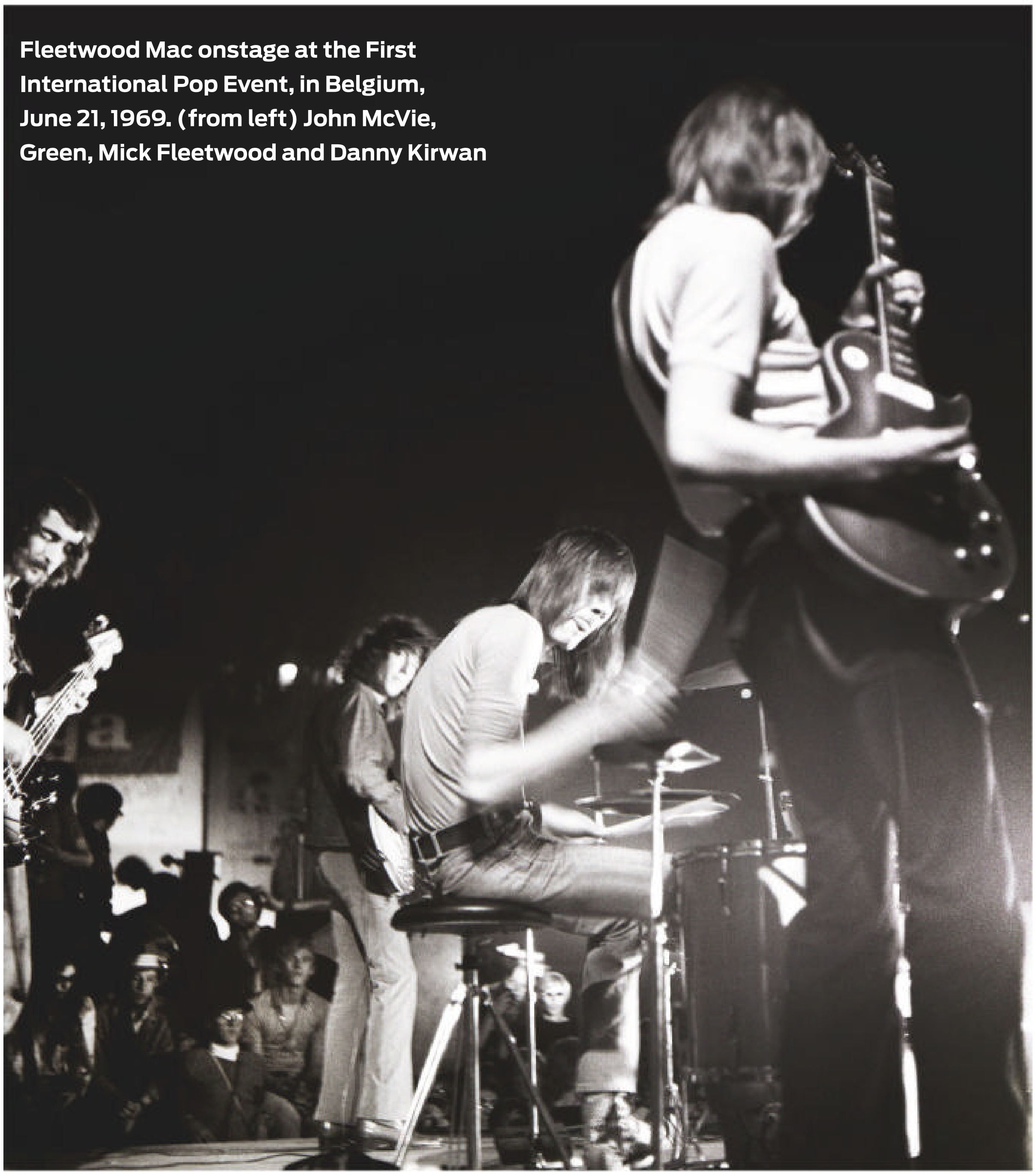
There must have been a lot of pressure on you when you replaced Eric Clapton in Mayall's group, especially when people were going around London scribbling things on walls like "Clapton is God." Did you feel intimidated following in his footsteps? I mean, those were pretty big shoes to try to fill.
No, because it was me who said he was God. [*laughs*] I was the one who kind of found him in my God-sort-of dreams. God was causing it. Someone said to me, "Clapton's not God." I said, "Yes, he is, and that's a guarantee!" Then I saw the God quotes in the paper and thought, Well, it didn't come from me, from my discovery, from my sort of confession. I suppose I was destined to follow in Eric

Clapton's footsteps. A lot of people were saying that at the time.

This seems like almost a very clichéd question, but people have debated over the years whether a white musician can play the blues with the same authenticity as a black person.
I'm an honorable guy, so I would say I'm not really playing blues myself. If there is any discrepancy or debate about what you're asking, I went to a club in New Orleans once with someone who wouldn't allow what his privilege was, and he made me remember that blues is brown-skin music. He was a very clever bloke, very, very good with words, and he said to me, "When I go out to see blues played, I know what color skin I want to see doing it." I said, "Well, of course, obviously," so perhaps that's the ultimate answer.

The blues have been pretty much forgotten by African-American audiences, who obviously prefer other types of music, like hip-hop and rap. Do you see rap as expressing similar types of frustration as the early blues compositions?
Yeah, it does have that same kind of release of frustration as the blues, the way they express it, doesn't it? But also a lot of positivity. The popularity of blues, though, kind of got sagged in the middle.

Back in the '70s, you lost a lot of time from your career when you were hospitalized. What memories do you have of that period?



Fleetwood Mac onstage at the First International Pop Event, in Belgium, June 21, 1969. (from left) John McVie, Green, Mick Fleetwood and Danny Kirwan

GIE KNAEPS/GETTY IMAGES

It wasn't my idea. I was tricked into going into the hospital and then being forced to take these tranquilizers, which was my most hated thing. I would say, "Look, I'm just trying to stay awake," but you ain't gonna be able to do that. You're left half asleep, with a sudden drop in identity, what I call "falsely complimented." They also tricked me into having the ECT [*electroconvulsive therapy*]. This Asian doctor kept saying to me, "Let me first give you a little injection," and I said, "No, no, no!" but he did it anyway. The whole time I was there, I was just trying to survive and routining. No pleasures, no luxuries, just going on the food lines, walking around and around, and watching television.

I know your many fans are delighted seeing you back onstage.
Well, when I first started doing shows again, it felt really strange, but I've since experienced the joy of feeling what it's like playing with other people again.

It must be great having Nigel with you.
Believe me or not, it's really him having me with him, even though he's more of a worldly person. He's more of a realist who conducts matters over cold ground.

When you're performing, is it much easier having Nigel doing all the singing?
Yes, it is easier, because I can concentrate more on guitar. I do like to sing, but I'd hardly consider myself a vocalist. I would hope to be considered a guitarist.

Do you have any particular favorite blues guitarists?
Well, I would start off with Skip James. And who's the one who did the song about a candyman?

I think you're referring to Mississippi John Hurt.
Yes, a great fingerpicking style, that right hand of his. What I'm into now is more the right hand of a player.

Of course, you made a terrific tribute album to Robert Johnson [*1998's* The Robert Johnson Songbook].

You're talking about a really great guitar player. Went through some very troubled times, but a great player. Absolutely.

What type of gear are you currently using, starting with amps?
Right now I'm using a [*Fender*] Prosonic with 10-inch speakers and 18-inch speaker cabinets. I've got a Vox that I don't use any more, except sometimes in the studio. I used to have a Vox bass amp with a lot of treble settings that I used for my first guitar playing, and also a Fender Blues DeVille that went to my guitar tech.

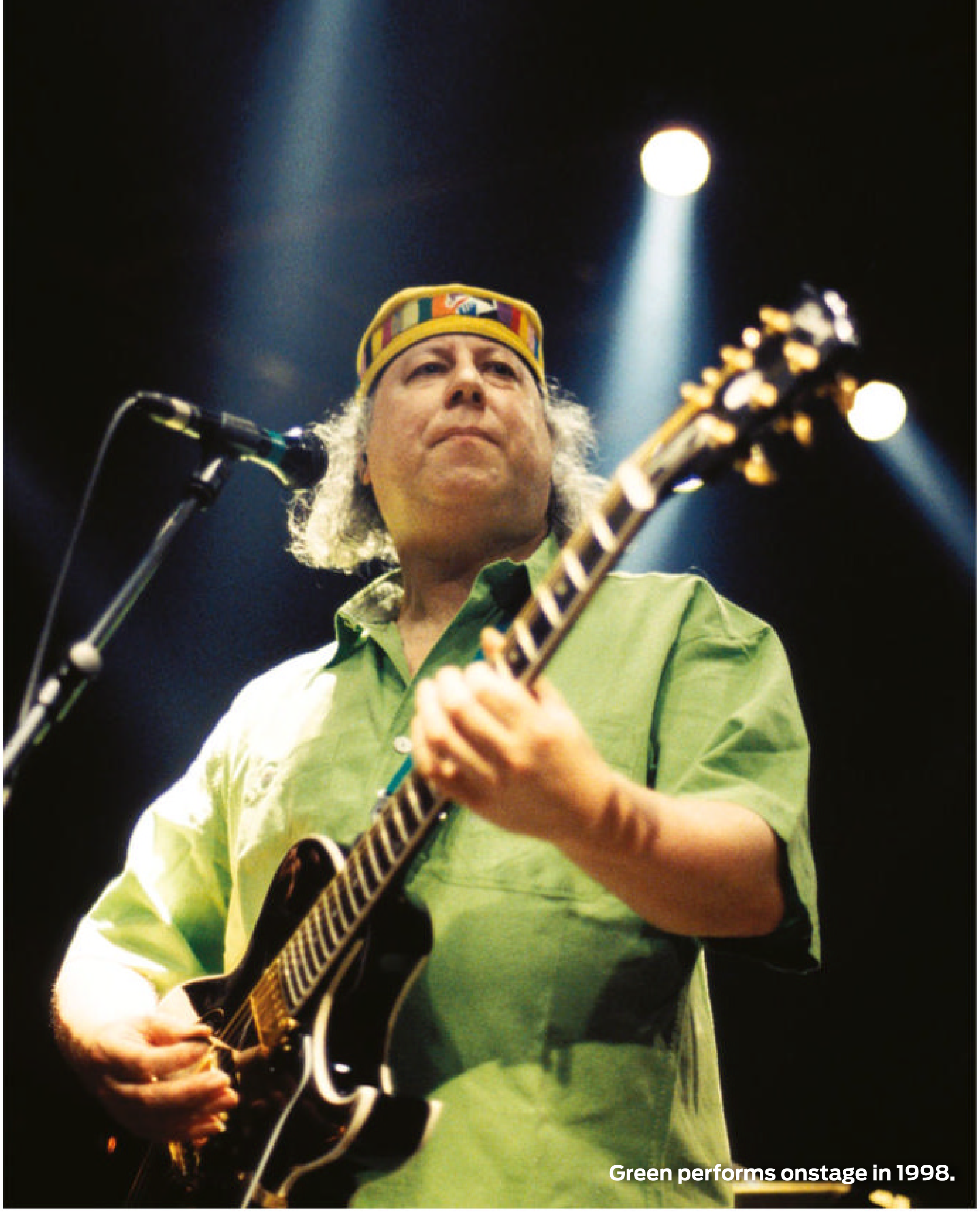
What about guitars? Are you still mainly using Stratocasters and your Howard Roberts Fusion?
The Howard Roberts is still settling in nicely onstage, and I have two Stratocasters, one of which I use for slide. I never thought I would do that, but the pickups sound so good. It sounds like Hawaiian guitar pickups.

And the Harmony Meteor?
Oh, yeah, I'm still using that too. It's a fabulous guitar, and I also have an Epiphone. I was using them both onstage together, which was interesting.

And for guitar strings, nine or 10 gauge?
I would never touch a nine or a 10. I actually prefer 11s or 12s, and at one time used 13s. Especially for slide, I prefer really heavy strings. And I also prefer playing without a pick, because I don't want to have to think about it.

Which guitars do you find work best for slide?
I have a pink Stratocaster with a lovely suede case that was given to me as a birthday present from one of the boys at Fender. I use that mostly for rhythm. For the lead parts onstage I like to use my Seafoam Green Stratocaster.

> **"IN SOME WAYS, I REGRET EVER BUYING A LES PAUL GUITAR. I SORT OF OVERSHADOWED ERIC'S BREAKTHROUGH"**



Green performs onstage in 1998.

ROBIN LITTLE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Are there any particular guitars that you find are better suited to studio work, and vice versa?
No, I'm usually in the dark about things like that, so we try getting a balance between different ones, and if something doesn't sound right, we'll try something else. We do try using different guitars in the studio, so sometimes I find myself playing something that's really strange to me.

Do you find as much enjoyment using acoustics in the studio as electrics?
Whatever the tune is, I'll have a go at it, and we'll figure out what it needs. I do get nervous playing acoustics in the studio, because it's very hard to get a good sound. Many times the sound comes out flat.

You once said you'd never play a Les Paul again. What made you say that at the time?
Well, I don't know. It was an interesting thing to have, but a bit too heavy for me. The other day, I saw one and kind of liked it, so I might keep an eye out for another one. Sometimes when you've got something really perfect, you don't realize it. I once had a mahogany one with an ebony finish and three pickups [*a Les Paul Custom*]. I felt like buying it and sending it to Eric Clapton, but he's probably already got one. In some ways, I regret ever buying a Les Paul guitar. I sort of overshadowed his breakthrough. I still feel sort of unaccomplished though, so I bought an electric piano to have in my house. I fiddle around with it. It's quite nice, you know.

When you saw the massive success Fleetwood Mac was having with the *Rumours* album, did you ever regret leaving and not being a part of it?
Once or twice I felt if I was to go back with them, or just do something like a

18+

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guest appearance at a few shows, that would be okay, but I guess I just needed a lift.

How did it feel being with the group at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction [*in 1998*]? Was that really a special thing for you?
Nobody understands what that whole thing is all about. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame… Inducted? Vinducted? Theraducted? I don't really accept anything like that. I'll have to think more about it and tell you the next time we talk.

Is it harder now coming up with the inspiration for new songs?
Not harder, but I'm always studying the development, or lack of development, in the old songs that I do. Always studying. That's where my sort of creative forces of energies would be applying themselves to. It can be found there on the old songs that we do — see if we can improve on them in any way.

Looking back on the troubled times you've been through, do you have any personal regrets?
No, I think it's better to have suffered in life and been uncomfortable than comfortable. If you're comfortable in life, I think the blues might evade you. Suffering is something holy, something very sad. If you grow up a rich kid with no problems, you miss a lot.

When you left Fleetwood Mac, you felt that it was wrong for rock stars to make massive sums of money. Do you still think that's true?
No. Back then, the acidheads had a different opinion, but I have no proof that rock stars have any money. They've never given any to me or taken me to any lavish restaurants! It could be interesting to say that rock stars have a lot of money, to take away the original sin; if the rock star keeps on rocking, he's going to be repeating himself. They all do seem to have something I haven't got, but they can keep it. It's something I don't want. [*laughs*] It gets to be more than a curse.

GEORGE WILKES/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Fleetwood Mac perform on U.K. TV in 1969. (from left) McVie, Green and Jeremy Spencer

MR. WONDERFUL

The stars pay tribute to Peter Green.

"So very sad to hear about Peter. We shared a lot of great music together. He was truly one of the greats."
— JOHN MAYALL

"We know you, B.B. King and Otis Rush are sharing living tales of wonderment. I cherish and treasure all the time we spent together (especially the time you invited me to be with you and your dearest mother; love the stuffed bell peppers she cooked). *A Hard Road*, you with John Mayall & the Blues Breakers, 'The Super-Natural' — just sacred. I love you, and I'll see you, Hendrix, SRV, Albert, Freddie, B.B. — all the Kings — Albert Collins, John Lee Hooker. Say hello to Coltrane, Miles, Jaco. See you in Eternity Hall. Peace."
— CARLOS SANTANA AND THE SANTANA BAND

"Peter Green was the most tasteful guitarist ever. I was lucky enough to see the original band in the 1960s and met him in the '90s in the Splinter Group."
— ANDY SCOTT, SWEET

"Goodbye to one of the greatest ever. Peter Green was a huge influence on my playing, and I actually got to play with him once right before I joined Santana, as I believe they were considering asking him to join as well."
— NEAL SCHON, JOURNEY

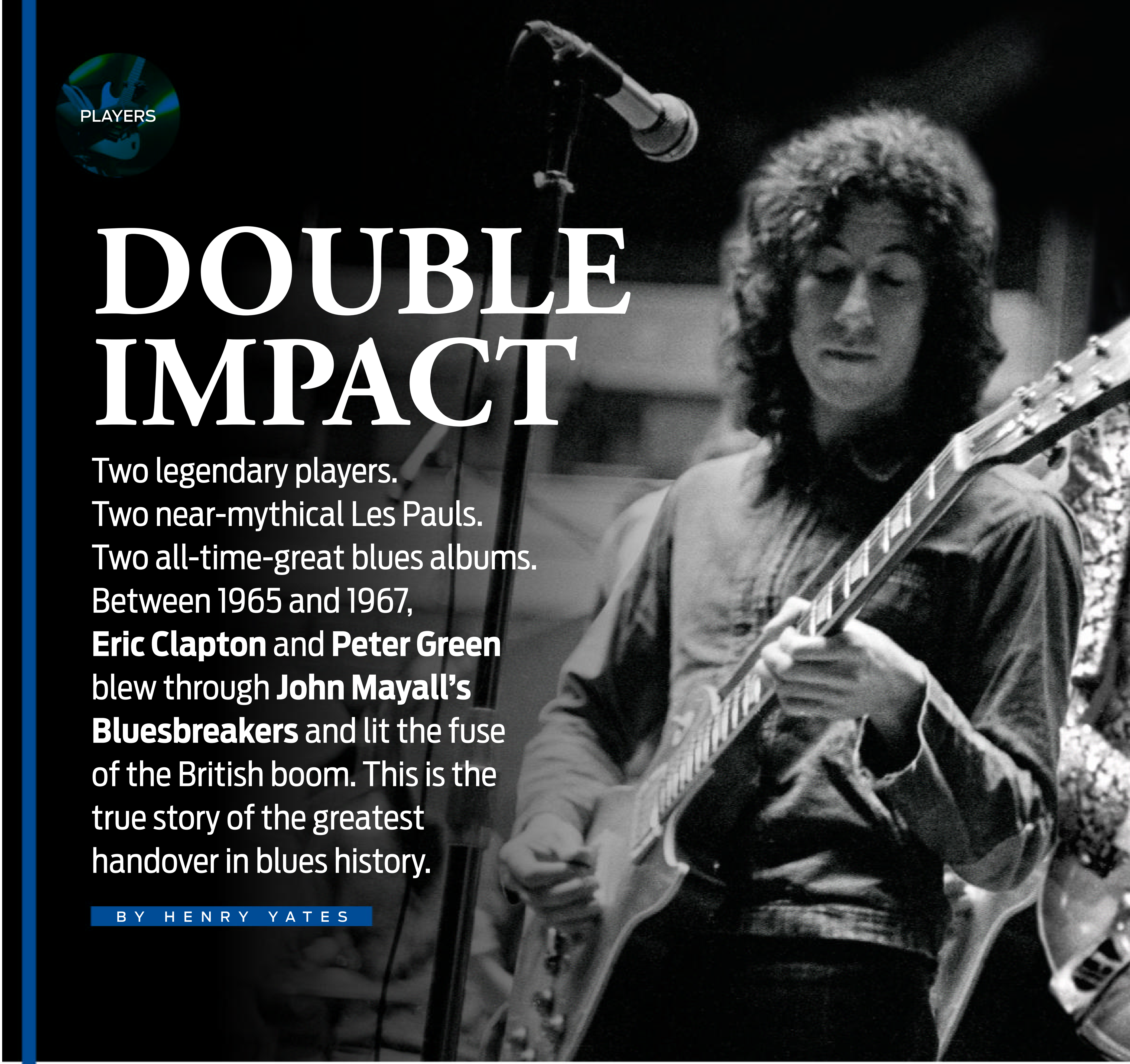
"No words can describe how I feel right now. Peter Green lives on through his music and his instrument. Our loss is total. Rest in peace, my friend."
— KIRK HAMMETT, METALLICA

"We have lost one of the most tasteful guitar players ever. I have always been a huge admirer. May he rest in peace."
— PETER FRAMPTON

"Peter's life was sad and storied, but he remains one of the greatest to ever unleash the power of music onto this world. What he created and contributed will continue to influence the best musical artists and arouse the most curious listeners for generations to come. He had it all — great guitar player, great songwriter, great singer."
— WARREN HAYNES, GOV'T MULE

"Peter was probably the best purveyor of blues guitar that Britain has ever produced. For tenderness and the ability to show how one's soul could be bared, Peter was the man."
— ANDY POWELL, WISHBONE ASH

"Peter was an extraordinary guitarist and a great influence."
— STEVE HACKETT



DOUBLE IMPACT

Two legendary players. Two near-mythical Les Pauls. Two all-time-great blues albums. Between 1965 and 1967, **Eric Clapton** and **Peter Green** blew through **John Mayall's Bluesbreakers** and lit the fuse of the British boom. This is the true story of the greatest handover in blues history.

BY HENRY YATES

IT IS MAY 1966, and the Decca Studios are quaking. Work stops. Employees wince. In the canteen, the seismic shudder rattles teacups and prompts angry objections. Little do the complainants realize that this racket is history being made. Had anyone been brave enough to enter the studio and fight through the wall of sound, they would have found a 21-year-old Eric Clapton at the eye of the storm, toting a Les Paul, driving a Marshall into the red and tracking the songs that would light the fuse of the blues boom on an album titled *Blues Breakers With Eric Clapton* — or as it came to be known, Beano, for its cover image in which Clapton is reading the comic of the same name. "Nobody had witnessed someone coming into the studio, setting up their guitar and amp, and playing at that volume," recalls Mike Vernon, the album's producer.

Clapton's primal scream was understandable. By the time he came to record the album, the precocious guitarist had plenty to get out of his system. A troubled young man with a tangled family background, his eye-popping ability had seen him deified in the Yardbirds, but by March 1965 he despaired of the R&B combo's new pop direction and was hungry to play blues. "We had completely sold out," he wrote in his memoir. "By then, I was a pretty grizzled and discontented individual."

NEW DIRECTIONS

While Clapton retreated to the Oxfordshire countryside to lick his wounds, another pivotal figure was eyeing his progress. Older and wiser, with a gruff authority and a scholarly appreciation of American blues, John Mayall had moved from Manchester to

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

London in 1963 at the suggestion of scene figurehead Alexis Korner. Mayall's band, the Bluesbreakers, was well-respected, but his 1965 debut album was too purist to compete with the prevailing R&B lite. It sold poorly, and he was dropped from the Decca label.

Mayall recognized that the Bluesbreakers lacked a guitarist to channel the hard, lean, electrified attack of Chicago players, such as Freddie King. And so, on March 28, 1965, he gathered his rhythm section around a jukebox in Nottingham, played the Yardbirds' neck-tingling B-side "Got to Hurry," and suggested they hire the ousted guitarist. "Eric was the first guitarist I heard who had it," the bandleader remembers.

"I was very grateful that someone saw my worth," Clapton adds, "and my thinking was that maybe I would be able to steer the band toward Chicago blues, instead of the sort of jazz blues they were currently playing."

Joining the lineup in April 1965, Clapton spent his days absorbing Mayall's extensive vinyl collection in the bandleader's attic. "Modern Chicago blues became my new Mecca," he recalls. "It was a tough electric sound, spearheaded by people like Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker."

By night, for a flat weekly fee of £35 — roughly $100 at the time — Clapton stepped out with the Bluesbreakers to play shows that left a crater in the London club scene. Aware that his new recruit was the group's selling point, the wily Mayall had chosen material to suit, with cuts such as Freddie King's instrumental "Hideaway" offering a showcase for Clapton's molten phrasing and perfectly weighted touch. "When Eric felt like playing," Mayall reflects, "you really took notice."

TRAILBLAZER

When the lineup descended on Decca Studios the following May, the Beano sessions were the perfect fusion of material and performance. Scan the album's track listing and you find a run of covers that confirmed Mayall's fathoms-deep blues knowledge, spiced with a fistful of the bandleader's originals. There was "Hideaway," of course — Clapton tearing through its three-minute duration with peerless soul and swagger — the smack-in-the-mouth lick of Mayall's own "Little Girl" and the swooped bends and thrilling double-time break of Otis Rush's "All Your Love."

> **"PETER GREEN WAS THE NEXT IN LINE. THAT WAS A NO-BRAINER"**
>
> — JOHN MAYALL

Memphis Slim's "Steppin' Out" was closer to a swagger, while Mayall's slow blues, "Have You Heard," achieved lift-off when Clapton's combustible solo entered the fray. No less powerful was the Mayall–Clapton co-write, "Double Crossing Time." "One of the greatest blues guitar solos ever," says Joe Bonamassa, who described Beano as the "template and universal language" for his 2012 album, *Driving Towards the Daylight*. "The fire he puts into that solo is unbelievable."

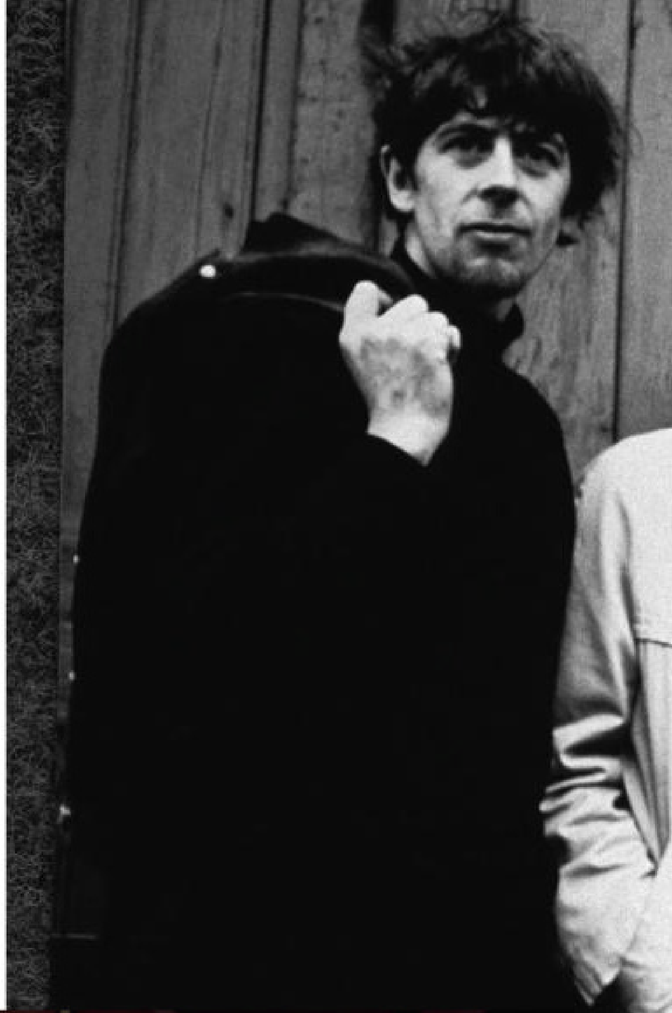
"No doubt about it, Beano was a trailblazer," Mayall says. "It's Eric's first stab at notoriety. When he felt the spirit, he was untouchable. It was a novelty back then for British musicians to be playing guitar like that."

RESURGENCE

Another line in the sand was Clapton's choice of guitar. In his early years, instruments had come and gone, from the Kay Red Devil of his childhood to the '63 Telecaster of his Yardbirds era. But his interest in the Les Paul had been piqued by the sleeve of Freddie King's *Let's Dance Away and Hide Away*, and he didn't hesitate upon spotting a '59 or '60 Cherry Sunburst example in the Lew Davis music shop. The price tag was £120, about $2,700 today — not cheap, but certainly not what the guitar would fetch on today's vintage market.

The Chicago bluesman could also indirectly take credit for Clapton's feted Beano tone. "It had really come about by accident," the British guitarist wrote of that honeyed roar. "I was trying to emulate the sharp, thin sound that Freddie King got out of his Gibson Les Paul, and I ended up with something quite different, a sound that was a lot fatter than Freddie's. What I would do was use the bridge pickup with all of the bass turned up, so the sound was very thick and on the edge of distortion."

Another critical factor was Clapton's amp. In this department, too, the guitarist had floundered, dabbling with a Vox in the Yardbirds, but finding the combo "too toppy." The fix came from



Jim Marshall's music shop and the amp maker's 1962 45-watt 2x12 combo. "I thought the solution was to get an amp and play it as loud as it would go until it was about to burst," Clapton says. "When I was doing that album, it was obvious that if you miked the amp too close, it'd sound awful, so you had to put it a long way away and get the room sound of that amp breaking up."

With the guitarist refusing to put the Marshall in an isolation room, it fell to producer Mike Vernon to help tame that shattering volume. His schemes included turning the combo to face the wall and draping a piano cover over the top. The guitarist, meanwhile, devised his own method to manage that power. "I'd hit a note, hold it and give it some vibrato with my fingers, until it sustained, and then the distortion would turn into feedback. It was all of these things, plus the distortion, that created what I suppose you'd call my sound."

ENTER GREENY

By the summer of 1966, that sound was everywhere, as Beano led the charge for Britain's nascent blues movement, and sparked the apocryphal "Clapton is God" graffiti that appeared in London. "The fact is," Clapton said, "that through my playing, people were being exposed to another kind of music, which was new to them, and I was getting all the credit, as if I had invented the blues."

Perhaps not, but Clapton dragged it overground. Released in July, *Blues Breakers With Eric Clapton* climbed to No. 6 in the charts and made stars of the band. But by then, its trophy guitarist had made other plans. Inspired by seeing Buddy Guy front a trio at the London Marquee, Clapton had begun jamming in secret with Ginger Baker and Jack Bruce in March 1966, and that summer he left to form Cream with them. "I had the unenviable task of explaining myself to John," he says. "He was upset that I was jumping off the train just as it was beginning to gather speed."

Mayall himself has always downplayed the impact of Clapton's exit. Whether or not the bandleader felt betrayed, it doubtless softened the blow that he had another extraordinary young guitarist in the wings. "Peter Green was the next in line," Mayall said with a shrug in 2012. "That was a no-brainer."

Peter Green. The name might not enjoy the same international recognition as Eric Clapton among fairweather music fans, but to blues aficionados he occupies the same rarified heights. Inspired by stateside titans like Buddy Guy, Freddie King, Otis Rush and B.B. King, Green had been knocking about in London for a while, playing bass in various bands, until an epiphany brought him back to six-strings. "I decided to go back on lead guitar after seeing Eric Clapton," the late guitarist recalled. "I'd seen him with the Bluesbreakers, and his whole concentration was on his guitar. He had a Les Paul, and his fingers were marvelous. The guy knew how to do a bit of evil, I guess."

In August 1965, Green saw his chance to do more than spectate, as an increasingly egocentric Clapton blew off his Bluesbreakers gig to tour Greece with a motley bunch of musicians known as the Glands. "I was so unreliable, so irresponsible," Clapton admits. "I would sometimes just not show up at gigs, and that's how Peter Green was asked to play with John."

HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL

While a flailing Mayall turned in desperation to a series of stand-in guitarists, Green did his best to undermine them. "Peter had pestered John to employ him," Clapton remembers, "often turning up at gigs and shouting from the audience that he was much better than whoever was playing that night. Though I barely knew him, I got the impression that here was a real Turk — a strong, confident person who knew exactly what he wanted. Most importantly, he was a phenomenal player, with a great tone."

It wasn't enough. When a contrite Clapton returned to Britain — his Greek adventure having soured after a club owner threatened to "cut my hands off" — Green found himself out in the cold. The guitarist was understandably ambivalent when, later in 1966, Mayall asked him to rejoin the lineup. "He was quite arrogant, in fact," the bandleader says. "He told me he'd been offered a gig in Eric Burdon's new band. Eventually, though, he couldn't resist. All he had to do then was win over the audiences that would shout, 'Where's Eric?' each night. But he got there in the end."

The fans weren't the only ones with early reservations. As Mike Vernon admits, when the new Bluesbreakers lineup pitched up at Decca Studios in

John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers in 1966. (from left) Mayall, Hughie Flint, Eric Clapton and John McVie

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

> **"I SAID, 'WAIT A MINUTE — YOU'VE GOT SOMEONE BETTER? THAN ERIC CLAPTON?'"**
>
> —PRODUCER MIKE VERNON

October 1966 to record *A Hard Road*, he struggled to believe this 19-year-old nonentity could fill Clapton's hallowed shoes. "I noticed an amplifier I had never seen before," the producer recalls, "so I said to John, 'Where's Eric Clapton?' Mayall says, 'He's not with us anymore, but don't worry, we've got someone better.' I said, 'Wait a minute — you've got someone better? Than Eric Clapton?' John said, 'He might not be better now, but you wait. In a couple of years, he's going to be the best.' Then he introduced me to Peter Green."

In more recent times, Green always brushed off his contribution to the album. "I'm only Eric Clapton's replacement; I'm not Eric Clapton," he insisted in a 1998 interview with *Guitarist*. "I didn't really know what I was doing on the guitar. I was very lucky to get anything remotely any good. I used to dash around on stepping stones. That's what I used to call it."

It's hard to square that assessment with *A Hard Road*. The moment Green unleashed a tight, biting solo on the opening title track, any sense of Clapton's loss evaporated. From his soulful runs on "Someday After a While (You'll Be Sorry)" to his fruity showboating on Freddie King's "The Stumble," this was a masterclass of phrasing and touch. As the standout track, Green's self-penned "The Super-Natural" was spookily brilliant, the guitarist conjuring 10-second sustained notes that seemed somehow right next to you and yet worlds away.

PHASE TWO

Green's inimitable tone came from some off-kilter tools. During Clapton's hiatus, the guitarist had auditioned using a Harmony Meteor. By the time he came aboard for *A Hard Road*, he was armed with a '59 Les Paul Standard whose quirks became legendary. "I stumbled across one when I was looking for something more powerful than my Meteor," Green recalled. "I went into Selmer's in Charing Cross Road and tried [*a Les Paul*]. It was only £110 and it sounded lovely, and the color was really good. But the neck was like a tree. It was very different from Eric's, which was slim. I've never seen another guitar with such an old-fashioned neck. But I couldn't consider a Telecaster for some reason, and I didn't want a Strat."

The defining feature of Green's '59 lay in the electronics. London luthier Sam Li worked on its neck pickup twice between November 1966 and April 1967. He reportedly rewound the pickup with smaller-gauge wire, rather than the factory spec, and later reversed the magnet, either accidentally or at Green's request. Combined with a Marshall amp, 4x12 cabinet and studio plate reverb, Green's guitar tracks had an out-of-phase quality and a sense of distance that was spellbinding.

Faced with such raw soul, it's not hard to understand why B.B. King considered Green's "the sweetest tone I ever heard," or Walter Trout's opinion that he was "the British blues guy who astounded me most in his heyday."

LEGACY

A Hard Road gave Mayall another chart hit after its February 1967 release, reaching No. 8. But once again, he was deserted by his star player when Green left that summer to form Fleetwood Mac with Breakers alumni Mick Fleetwood and John McVie. "Do I ever wish I'd had longer to work with Peter?" Mayall pondered. "No. You can't think in terms like that."

Post-1967, the principals in this story enjoyed mixed fortunes. Clapton went from Cream to a solo career that thrives to this day. Green's early flush of success with Fleetwood Mac was derailed by mental health issues, and though he later reemerged with the Splinter Group, many argue his touch never quite recovered. Buoyed by the pair's all-star patronage, the Gibson Les Paul was reintroduced in 1968 and became the choice of blues-leaning rockers from Jimmy Page to Paul Kossoff. Mayall rolled on, snapping up future Rolling Stone Mick Taylor and recording *Crusade*.

As for Beano and *A Hard Road*, the bold, ballsy, utterly British guitar playing on those two seminal albums kick-started the rise of a heavier, hairier brand of blues as the '70s loomed into view.

Daring Adventures

STEPHEN MALKMUS CHALLENGED HIMSELF TO UNPLUG. THE RESULT IS *TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES*, A SURPRISING MIX OF ACOUSTIC FOLK AND MUTED PSYCH-ROCK.

BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

JASON QUIGLEY/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES

JASON QUIGLEY/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES

STEPHEN MALKMUS WILL always be most associated with the skewed, slacker indie-rock sound he spearheaded — and, if we’re being honest, more or less perfected — with Pavement in the 1990s. But while that outfit called it a day as a recording unit at the close of the 20th century, the now 54-year-old singer, songwriter and guitarist has never stopped creating music.

Since then, Malkmus has released a steady stream of records with his band the Jicks, as a solo artist and as a collaborator with acts like Silver Jews. And in the past three years alone, he’s unveiled a trio of wildly divergent albums: 2018’s electric-guitar-centric Jicks effort, *Sparkle Hard*, 2019’s synth-and-drum-machine-drive *Groove Denied*, and now, the hushed *Traditional Techniques* (Matador/Domino). This newest release is another left turn for Malkmus. On it, he presents a set of songs focused squarely on his voice and 12-string guitar picking, and adorned with all manner of non-Western instruments from the Balkans, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Persia, including the stringed rabab, the flute-like kaval, and percussive instruments like the udu and daf.

Which, to a degree, explains, the album’s title. “I’m not saying it’s traditional music,” Malkmus explains on the phone from his home in Portland, Oregon, “but we do use *some* traditional instruments. And maybe we’re using them to come up with something new.”

Indeed, the album, which Malkmus has called a “self-dare” (more on that in a bit), is something new for him. In addition to his own acoustic playing and the rather unusual instrumentation, the record features the Decemberists’ Chris Funk on pedal steel, Dobro, Weissenborn, Moog and autoharp (Funk produced the record as well), and some hot-wire electric guitar leads courtesy of Matt Sweeney, who shines in particular on the very Velvet Underground–inspired first single, “Xian Man.”

> “I WANTED AT LEAST HALF THE SONGS TO BE SOMETHING YOU COULDN’T PLAY ON AN ELECTRIC, BECAUSE THEY WOULD SOUND STUPID”

“I thought that was going to be kind of a Tony Joe White or Gordon Lightfoot song, but Matt’s solo was so Velvets,” Malkmus says of the song. “So I was like, ‘I gotta do some Lou Reed!’ ”

Beyond that, there’s rich, somber strumming on “Cash Up” and “Amberjack,” a hypnotic hippie-jam vibe on “ACC Kirtan” and drone-y exotica on “Shadowbanned,” among other stylistic indulgences.

Mostly, though, there’s Malkmus and his acoustic, which is just the way he wanted it. “I like actual acoustic music,” he says. “I’ve always played a lot of it. A lot of us do, you know? It has a utility in our lives.”

He laughs. “You don’t want to always have music that’s attacking you like a dog or something. It doesn’t always have to be, ‘Put on *Exile on Main St.*, turn it up and drink whisky!’ ”

At Santeria Toscana 31, Milan, Italy, September 27, 2019, with an Ernie Ball Music Man St. Vincent

ROBERTO FINIZIO/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

You've called this record a "self-dare." What do you mean by that?

Well, the "dare" part, I guess, was that I wanted to do something that was actually, in its form, acoustic music, not just music played on an acoustic guitar. You know that thing people say? "If you can't play it on an acoustic guitar, if it doesn't stand up that way, it's not a real song." This isn't that. I wanted at least half the songs to be something you couldn't play on an electric because they would sound stupid. I didn't want to just do a quieter version of what I've always done.

You made this record with Chris Funk from the Decemberists, who also produced *Sparkle Hard*.

Yeah, and I guess the "dare" part is also related to that. We were doing *Sparkle Hard* together and he had some acoustics at his studios [*Halfling Studios in Portland*]. And he was like, "We can make one" — meaning a folk record. "Let's do it!" And, you know, I can just kind of coast along in my bubble of music, which has been great. I have great musicians to play with, and a comfortable routine. But this got me thinking a little differently.

How so?

I changed some parameters in my songwriting, and in some really basic ways. Like, I got an acoustic guitar and I found out what range I sing in and what's different about it when I sing quietly. Because when you're singing in a lower range, you can't project over rock music — at least I can't. I mean, you listen to some bands like the Deftones, and Chino [*Moreno*] is whispering over huge music. But I don't really do that. I want the music to sound like how it'd have to sound if I was playing it live.

Was there specific music that inspired you when you wrote these songs?

I tapped into different things from my collection, whether it was British folk music or some private press [*small-batch artist-released*] records. And when I say "British folk," I don't mean medieval-sounding tunes about your lover dying in the lea or something, but more like Pentangle and maybe even *Led Zeppelin III* — more that, and less boomer acoustic touchstones like Crosby, Stills & Nash or Jackson Browne. I was open to records by people who were influenced by those guys, but who were more burned out. [*laughs*] And there's also some stuff in the style of the Grateful Dead, Rolling Stones and Gordon Lightfoot. But I thought, maybe in my own way, I could update the music that's played that way.

At what point did the idea of using more exotic instrumentation come into play?

That was Chris's idea, and it was early on, when he heard the demos, I think. The songs that those guys play on are the ones that potentially skew you toward something non-Western sounding. I don't know what to call those scales, but they're not the feel-good, happy Grateful Dead scales.

So Chris knew these guys — I didn't. And the amazing thing is he called them and arranged it, and they came down to the studio. And it was so cool! There were these two dudes and his girlfriend, and they're playing, like, mini sitar on the first song. And what you hear on the album is the first take. I was like, "All right, we got this. I'm feeling some momentum."

So you wrote and recorded the songs in demo form before the other instrumentation was conceived or added to the track?

Yeah. I just handed the guys raw demos. Usually, I hand my band demos with bass, drums and maybe keyboard ideas. It sounds like a sloppy mini-band. But this time I just went downstairs and did acoustic guitar on two tracks and maybe doubled some guitar, and that was it. I sent that to the people who were going to be on the record, and they were like, "Yeah, we'll do it." We fleshed out some of the arrangements with new melodies and things, but overall the songs are pretty simple. There are, like, four chords and a change, or just us jamming on one tone. I consciously kept it that way. Also, the reality of me playing a 12-string meant it was going to stay pretty basic, because the one I have is a '70s Guild that's kind of hard to play. It has a really wide neck, and I was playing it with my fingers. You can't really shred on that if you're me.

I don't know that you could shred on that if you were somebody else, either.

Yeah. And these days, it seems no one is playing the 12-string. I mean, the only time I've seen one lately is when I watched the Taylor Swift documentary [*2020's* Miss Americana], and she used to write songs on one. So basically it's her and me, you know? [*laughs*]

That's the entirety of the 12-string guitar world: Stephen Malkmus and Taylor Swift.

[*laughs*] Yeah. And she's on this beat-up Ovation, and that guitar sounds terrible. Sorry, Swifties. Don't cancel me!

So what led you to the Guild?

It has kind of a dark tone, and I wanted a darker, more scary sound, rather than a

GARY WOLSTENHOLME/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

At the Pavement-curated All Tomorrow's Parties Festival, Minehead, England, May 15, 2010

happy 12-string tone. Actually, about a year and a half ago, I tried to sell the guitar back to the store where I bought it in Portland. They said, "We'll give you $200." And I was like, "F*ck you!" I'm not mad at them. That's probably what it was really worth. I mean, it's probably worth $500, but it's beat up.

Well, the store didn't take the guitar back, but you got a record out of it. It worked out.

Exactly! I was like, "I'm gonna show them what this little engine can do with some love!"

In the last three years, you've done three records — *Sparkle Hard*, *Groove Denied* and this one — and they're all pretty different sounding from one another. But you've called them "a trilogy of sorts." What is it that makes them hang together?

Time. The fact that they all came out fast. I like to say that it's three records in a short period of time that are hopefully all good. And that shows that I'm good, you know? [*laughs*] But actually, to me this one and *Sparkle Hard* feel related because they were both done with Chris at his studio, so sonically they're going to be a little similar. And I really like *Groove Denied*, even if it seems other people don't like it as much. But I still think it should be in there with the other two. It's a way of saying, "Yeah, you covered a lot of ground in a short amount of time. Good job, Steve. You've still got it!"

Love them or hate them, the records show that, at this stage of your career, you're still intent on exploring new sounds and styles. Do you think that's what the industry and the fans want from you, or do they just want you to do the Pavement thing?

Well, I think they would like this acoustic record, because people can relate anything in a guitar/songwriter mode to Pavement if that's what they want. Plus, my voice is quieter, and the album has acoustic guitars, and it's kind of chill, and it can fit in people's hypothetical playlist or in a different corner of their lifestyle music world. So I think people would like this one, as long as it's not, like, a 17-minute song with me singing in pig Latin, or something.

Do you ever feel you're fighting against people just wanting you to do, say, Pavement's *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain* album over and over again?

Not really. Based on what I see online — and that's really all I see — I get good feedback. There's a lot of "I was a Pavement fan, and I like what you're doing." And yeah, we lose people along the way. But we probably would have lost them anyway. To be honest, I don't always keep up with the bands I love, or what they did in their later periods, so I'm one of the ones who knows how much that should hurt. [*laughs*] I mean, I don't know if the Cure have made any albums lately. And if they have, I don't know what they sound like. And I thought the Cure were incredible.

So I think it's okay if people aren't keeping up with what I'm doing. I just think if your music sounds fresh, that's the most you can do. That's a subjective thing too, but I guess that's what I'm going for.

INDIE JONES

Stephen Malkmus picks five fab discs from his alt-rock canon.

SLANTED AND ENCHANTED
PAVEMENT
(1992)

"*Slanted and Enchanted* was like our coming out party. We could finally tell our parents, 'Mom, I'm in a band and it's going to be okay.' [*laughs*] I was living in Brooklyn, or maybe Jersey City, and I went back home to Stockton, California, for Christmas break, and I just kind of bashed out the songs. I brought it back to New York and played it for the guys, and they were like, 'This is really good, Steve. Good job!' Pavement had done some EPs and gotten some good attention from the fanzine community, but this was the start of the band as a business proposition. Matador put it out, and the record became a bit of a cult hit. The band was still sort of cryptic. We had fake names, and we hadn't really played any concerts, maybe just a couple of shows. But I'm grateful that people liked it. It saved my life from working in bars."

CROOKED RAIN, CROOKED RAIN
PAVEMENT
(1994)

"This is an important album, both for my creativity and economic livelihood. We put a lot of effort into sounds and tones and layering things with different types of instruments, and I really had time to experiment with different amps and guitars. I wanted to make an album

Malkmus performing with Pavement, July 28, 1992

DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

that was different from *Slanted and Enchanted*, which had touchstone bands like the Fall and the Pixies, and indie rock in general. So I had some different signifiers. Like the first song, 'Silence Kid' — I was thinking of Free's 'All Right Now,' and there's a Buddy Holly sound to it, too. Then there's a song influenced by Can, and a kind of creepy lounge song called 'Newark Wilder.' There's Eagles country rock, which is just a wider, primarily Americana-influenced range of sounds, and there's a grunge song, 'Unfair,' which is us trying to write a Nirvana-style song. It's definitely of our era."

STEPHEN MALKMUS

STEPHEN MALKMUS (2001)

"After 10 years, countless tours, many artistic highs and probably some lows, Pavement called it quits on the eve of 2000. It just seemed like we had done so much stuff, and I wasn't sure we were going to achieve anything more artistically. And I was really tired. So that ended. And then I found myself moving to Portland, and it was, Okay, what am I going to do? I met some of the people in the scene, and I decided to make an album. I chose to make it a mix of some of the harder rock that I was starting to get into, which was bands like the Groundhogs, and, I guess you could say, blues rock — which actually doesn't come across now. I also wanted to have some kitschy keyboards and really bad-sounding things that I thought would have sort of a trashy, cheap-and-cheerful vibe. I wanted to do something upbeat and fun and playful. And that's what I did."

STEPHEN MALKMUS AND THE JICKS
SPARKLE HARD

SPARKLE HARD STEPHEN MALKMUS AND THE JICKS (2018)

"We did this one at the same studio in Portland where we did *Traditional Techniques*. It's the last album I've made with the Jicks thus far. I would say it's in the realm of [*2011's*] *Mirror Traffic* and [*2014's*] epically titled *Wig Out at Jagbags* — electric songwriter music with a couple of outbursts of guitar heroics and fuzz. And there are a couple of notable things here. It has some string arrangements on a song called 'Solid Silk,' and there are some spots where I tried to play wah without it sounding like I have bell-bottoms on. I use it more as a percussive thing. And I also messed with Auto-Tune on a couple of songs, too. We'll see how that ages. I think one of the songs is aging well and the other is not."

DENIED
STEPHEN MALKMUS
GROOVE

GROOVE DENIED (2019)

"For the *Guitar Player* magazine listener, this might not be the place to start if you're looking for my version of, you know, guitar shredding. [*laughs*] There are a couple of proto-garage-rock songs on there, but it's an album that was more about recording in a digital-audio workstation environment. I was writing with keyboards, and I have this old Memorymoog that I always wanted to feature a little bit more. It's was like, imagine a dude like me, who's had some success with old-school boomer-style recording, gets locked in a room with these instruments, and this is what he comes up with. It's also based on some other music that I've always liked, which is not only post-punk from the '80s and Joy Division–style stuff but also more modern Vaporwave and things like that." — RB

TOGETHER ALONE

Molly Tuttle turns the loneliness of lockdown into a rewarding home-recording experience on ...*But I'd Rather Be With You.*

BY JIMMY LESLIE

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZACH PIGG

WHILE LOCKDOWN HAS prevented many of us from doing some of our favorite things, ruby-crowned bluegrass princess Molly Tuttle used the time to select an eclectic batch of covers, learn how to use Pro Tools and track her new album, ...*But I'd Rather Be With You* (Compass). She worked remotely with Los Angeles–based producer Tony Berg, whose session-guitar, arrangement and production credits include Peter Gabriel, Eric Johnson and Charlie Sexton. Tuttle lifted the poignant album title from a lyric in "Standing on the Moon," from the Grateful Dead's final studio album, 1989s *Built to Last*. It's a nod to her roots in the San Francisco Bay Area, but Tuttle adopted Nashville as her home many moons ago, and in March the combination of a devastating tornado tearing through Music City and the global pandemic created the perfect storm that led her to seek solace in familiar tunes, while sheltering in place.

It's always interesting to see what a true triple threat like Tuttle chooses to do with cover tunes, both in terms of her selections and the degree of liberty she takes with them. For ...*But I'd Rather Be With You*, she plucked tunes from seemingly every genre and era, sticking to the charts in some cases and cutting loose in others. Fans of Tuttle's *Rise* EP — which brought her not only recognition but also Instrumentalist of the Year honors at the 2018 Americana Music Awards, and a pair of trophies for the International Bluegrass Music Association's Guitar Player of the Year award in 2017 and 2018 — will be happy to hear the champion flatpicker rip bluegrass licks to shreds within the context of Yeah Yeah Yeah's dance-floor anthem "Zero" and Rancid's punk rocker "Olympia, WA." Those who dug the singer-songwriter aesthetic Tuttle displayed on her 2019 debut LP, *When You're Ready*, will like the way she serves the National's salty slice of Americana "Fake Empire" and the aforementioned Dead missive with stellar sensitivity. And everyone should appreciate her crosspicking prowess on her adventurous adaptation of the Rolling Stones' psychedelic ditty "She's a Rainbow." We got Tuttle on the phone to talk us through her process.

Why did you choose to record covers rather than originals during such a trying time?

I was struggling creatively and having a hard time finding my own words to express my feelings. So the idea for this record was about going back to special songs that have helped me through times in my life and inspired me through the years. It meant a lot to me to put my own voice on them, and hopefully they will help other people.

Which of these tunes got you going on the right track?

The song I wanted to learn first was "Fake Empire." The National's version has a beautiful piano part with a three-over-four polyrhythm, where one hand is playing in three and the other is playing in four. I wanted to figure out if I could make it work on guitar. I did that by going fingerstyle, with my thumb playing in three on the lower strings while working the treble strings with my fingers over the top in four. It doesn't

sound complex at all when you hear it, but it was a challenge. I use a capo at the third fret and play in the key of E♭. The tuning is standard, except for the first string, which is tuned up a step, so I have an open string when I go to the IV chord.

It sounds as if the time signature is 3/4 with a dotted eighth-note feel to the four guitar plucks over the top.

I saw an interview with the National where they called it "four over three." When I hear that rhythm, I remember learning about it in school, where it was called "Pass the goddamn butter," because saying those words has that rhythm. That was always referred to as "three over four," so I think of it that way, but actually everyone is playing in three except for that syncopated guitar rhythm on top in four, so maybe it is four over three. Maybe they are interchangeable, but mostly it's in three, with that bit in four sprinkled over the top of it.

> "I WAS STRUGGLING CREATIVELY AND HAVING A HARD TIME FINDING MY OWN WORDS TO EXPRESS MY FEELINGS"

Can you describe another guitar challenge that inspired you to cover a particular tune?

"She's a Rainbow" comes to mind as one of the more guitar-driven songs. Again, I was very drawn to the piano part, so I learned the piano arrangement and put my own voice to it on guitar. I struggled to find the right key for my vocal range. The original is in B♭, so I started out learning to play it from a G shape using a capo, but it didn't work for me to sing it in that key because some of the notes were too low. I ended up doing it in the key E out of a C chord shape with a capo at the fourth fret. I actually used a program called Transcribe! [*from Seventh String Software*]. I put the Rolling Stones' version in and had it transcribed to E so I could hear how the vocals would sit a little better, and I played along with that for a while. I tried strumming the rhythm for the chorus like I might normally do on a guitar, but it didn't feel light enough. The song is so playful that I wound up adapting the entire piano part into a guitar part that I play with a pick the whole way through. There's a lot of cross picking, where I'm jumping from lower strings to higher strings in order to cover all the pieces of a two-hand piano part. It's especially challenging to do while singing. I've worked it up to the point where I can do it now, but I recorded my parts separately, and "She's a Rainbow" was one of the few songs I did without a click track because it breaks time at certain points in the song, and that would have been a nightmare for me to manage. I played the main track without a click, and the engineer was able to create a click track based on my performance so we could then overdub all the subsequent parts to that.

Do you still favor the Dunlop JazzTone 207 pick?
That's still my main one, but for this record I recorded some stuff with a Wegen pick. I can't remember the model or thickness, but I liked how it sounded brighter and had a more audible attack than the JazzTone, which is such a heavy-duty pick with a round sound. I think I might be transitioning to the Wegen, but I don't know right now. I go back and forth.

How about the guitar? Did you play the same Pre-War dreadnought featured on *When You're Ready*?
I played a new Pre-War for all of the acoustic guitar parts. I played a hollowbody Collings electric guitar on "Something on Your Mind." I got this Pre-War about a year ago, but I didn't start playing it until a few months ago, and it's my current favorite. I always do that with a new guitar. It takes a while for me to settle in, and then I start playing it all the time. *When You're Ready* mostly features a Pre-War with mahogany back and sides. The Pre-War on the new record has a spruce top with a sunburst finish and Brazilian rosewood back and sides. I've been enjoying the Brazilian one because it feels more resonant. I've heard people describe Brazilian rosewood as sounding like a grand piano, because you can hear so many overtones, and that may be why it seemed to work so well for the songs on this album. It's become my favorite to play live as well, because the sound is super clear, but I still love the sound of mahogany. I switch back and forth, depending on the tone that best suits a particular song.

> **"I HAVE A BATCH OF NEW SONGS, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHICH ONES WILL END UP ON A RECORD"**

Can you detail some of the challenges about learning how to record at home?
I'm not much of a gear person, and I didn't have a studio setup at my home, so I borrowed some nice stuff, and there was a bit of a learning curve. It felt like I had to troubleshoot something every day for the first few days, but it was usually something like a buzz or RF interference. It didn't take too long to get the hang of setting up a session and learning to record tracks, which is all I had to do on my own. I'd settle on a tempo and get a click track going. Then I'd play through the song maybe four times using a Shure SM57 to capture the main acoustic track. I'd position it around the 15th fret and slant it toward the sound hole. I'd send those main tracks to my producer, Tony Berg. He'd choose one as the primary take and

then maybe use a section of one of the other takes if he felt it was necessary. Then he'd send me back that comp track, and I'd add another acoustic using a Shure SM7B pointed a little more directly at the sound hole for a different tone. I was going to use that as my vocal mic. I decided to go another direction, but I liked the sound of the two different Shure mics in combination for multitracking acoustic guitar, which I'd never really done before. From the microphone, the signal went into an old preamp that I borrowed from Ryan Hewitt, who produced *When You're Ready*, then into a little [*Roland*] Quad-Capture interface and, finally, into my laptop.

Got any tips for live streaming an acoustic guitar–and-vocal performance?
I'm still figuring that out, but I'll generally use a single condenser microphone to capture both. I've mostly been using an Audio Technica 4033a, which is what I used to record all the vocals for this record. Sometimes I'll use my USB mic for live streams if the internet connection is too slow to handle a nice mic sound.

Has your muse started to come through your instrument again now that you've hit your groove?
Yes. I've been writing a lot, both on my own as well as co-writing over Zoom. I'm finding it fun to finish a song and then bring someone else in at the last minute to act as a song doctor, because it's hard to remain objective sometimes. I have a batch of new songs, but I don't know which ones will end up on a record. I'm just trying to write as much as I can.

Thanks for being a judge at the U.K. Guitar Show in London last September, and for being a judge in our new Guitarist of the Year contest [*see page 20*]. This year it's all video submissions, of course, but you do us the honor of lending your ears and eyes remotely, which is clearly the way of the world for the foreseeable future.
That was fun last year. I'm looking forward to it this year as well.

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Chord Soloing, Jazz Style, Part 1

Master the beautifully musical style of soloing with chords, just like the jazz greats.

BY MILTON MERMIKIDES

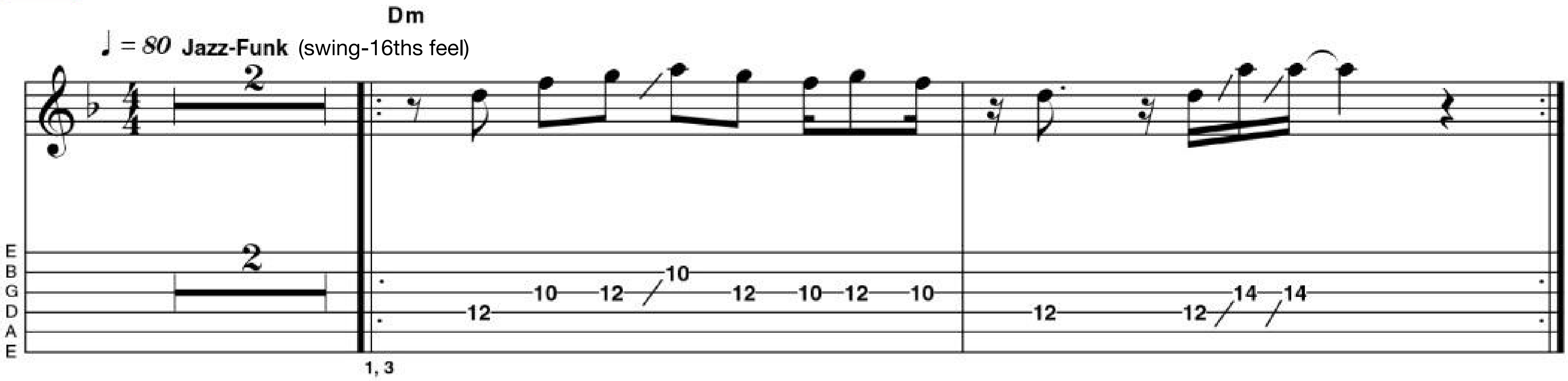
AUSTIN HARGRAVE

George Benson with his Ibanez LGB30 signature guitar

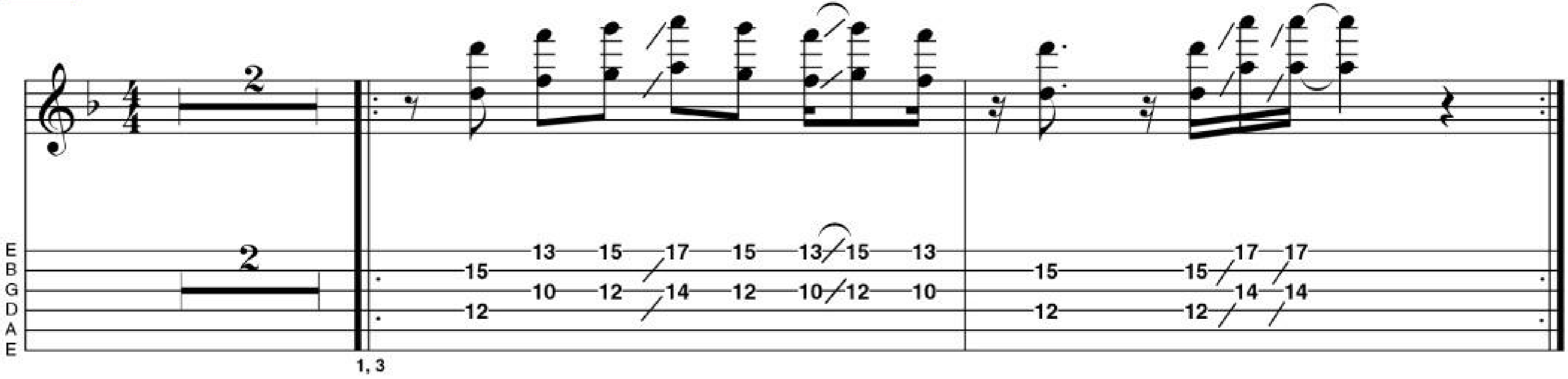
THE CONVENTIONAL ROLES of the lead and rhythm guitarist are quite clear: The rhythm guitarist plays chords that accompany the lead guitarist, who plays the usually higher, faster and "more important" single-note material. This dichotomy, however, is not always true or musically desirable, and the guitar's long history includes many players who have chosen to explore the middle ground — "soloing" using a variety of chords for both harmonic support and textural variation. It may at first seem overwhelming to consider soloing with chords when it's hard enough to learn chords and scales separately, especially considering the guitar's asymmetrical tuning (with the G and B strings being tuned a major 3rd apart while all the other pairs of adjacent strings are tuned in perfect 4ths). And it must be noted that a guitarist who can solo effectively with chords in a variety of contexts knows both music theory and the guitar fretboard very well indeed, as one needs to be agile both creatively and technically to utilize this approach.

Fortunately, one can develop knowledge and skill in this area through a series of conceptual and practical exercises. Although there are many highly accomplished blues, rock, soul and pop chord soloists, I've opted to focus on the genre of jazz here, because it allows us to experiment with a wide range of melodic, harmonic and modal concepts, from the minor pentatonic and blues scales to standard jazz-style chord progressions to modes. These concepts can, of course, be applied to other styles you like, but the rich, eclectic and beautiful world of jazz guitar is a great place to start with this study. Working on these ideas will improve your soloing, allowing greater harmonic support and

Ex. 1a Minor Pentatonic Seed Phrase



Ex. 1b Octaves



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independence, particularly when playing in smaller ensembles, such as a guitar-bass-drums trio. They'll also help you incorporate a greater variation of textures into your lead playing, other than just single notes, which can help you build a solo effectively and keep it interesting, especially when playing with a clean, undistorted tone.

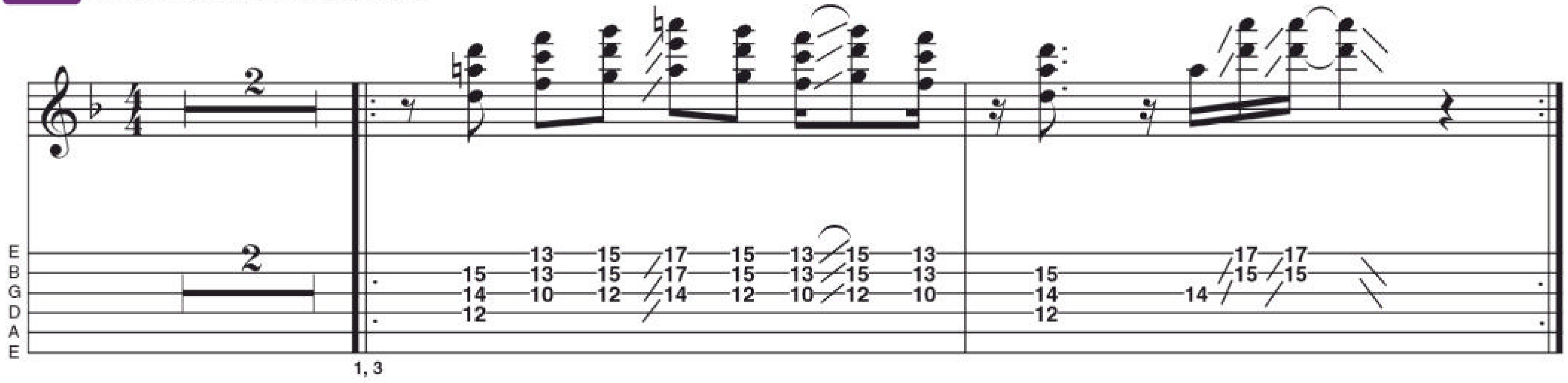
This lesson includes 11 exercises/examples, presented in two parts (this month and next), that focus on and demonstrate various useful chord soloing concepts and approaches. In this first part, we will look at five examples that demonstrate the following:

- How the all-important minor pentatonic and blues scales can serve as a basis for octave, double-stop and chordal soloing.
- Bluesy double-stop ideas for dominant 7 chords all over the fretboard.
- How to build agility and fluency with minor 7, dominant 7 and major 7 chord shapes on the guitar's top four strings.

For purposes of illustration and comparison, I've chosen to use just one key center for each concept, but transposing these ideas to and practicing them in different keys and contexts is essential to properly absorb them, so be sure to do that on your own. So dial in an appropriately clean and warm-sounding neck-pickup tone, and let's get started!

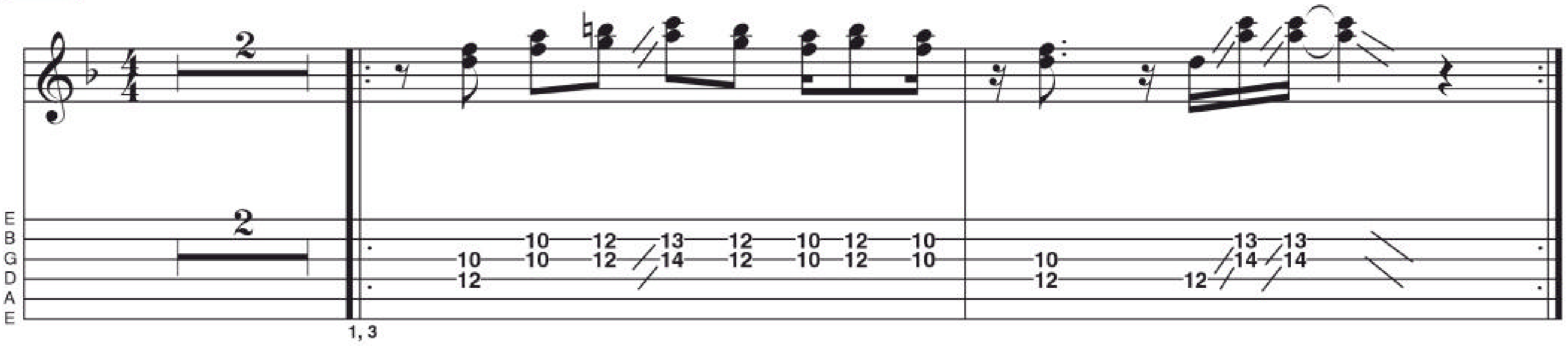
We'll begin by looking at an example of how to construct a chord solo from the minor pentatonic scale, specifically D minor pentatonic (D, F, G, A, C). **Ex. 1a** presents a simple "seed phrase" that we will use to build a number of chord solo ideas. **Ex. 1b** shows the same melody played in strummed octaves using an approach popularized back in the 1960s

Ex. 1c Harmonization in Octaves + 5ths



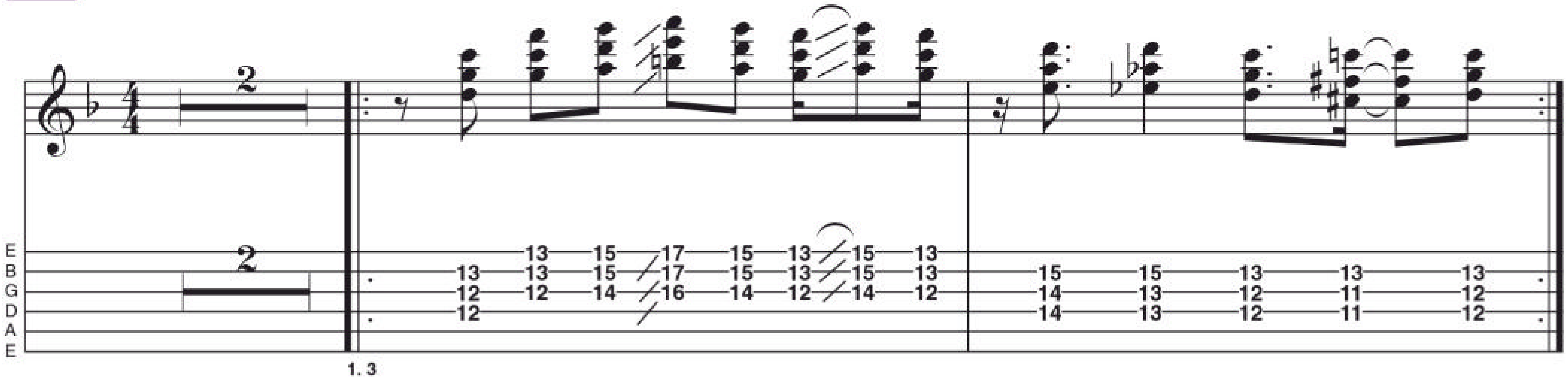
2
E B G D A E
15 14 12
13 13 10
15 15 12
17 17 14
15 15 12
13 13 10
15 15 12
13 13 10
15 14 12
14
17 15
17 15
1, 3

Ex. 1d Harmonization in 3rds



2
E B G D A E
10 12
10 10
12 12
13 14
12 12
10 10
12 12
10 10
10 12
12
13 14
13 14
1, 3

Ex. 1e Harmonization in stacked 4ths with chromatic embellishment



2
E B G D A E
13 12 12
13 13 12
15 15 14
17 17 16
15 15 14
13 13 12
15 15 14
13 13 12
15 14 14
15 13 13
13 12 12
13 11 11
13 12 12
1, 3

by the Legendary Wes Montgomery, with each melody note doubled an octave higher. When playing octaves like this and moving up and down the fretboard, it helps to visually focus on the lower note, fretted with the 1st, or index, finger while maintaining a constant three-fret distance between it and the 4th finger, or pinkie, which is two strings higher. Be sure to mute the unused string between each octave pair with the "paw" of your 1st finger, to prevent it from ringing as you strum across all three strings. To emulate Wes' warm, jazzy touch, strum the strings with downstrokes of your pick-hand's bare thumb. Note that, when playing strummed octaves on the A and G strings or the low E and D strings, the octave-higher note would only be two frets higher, not three, due to the way the guitar is tuned.

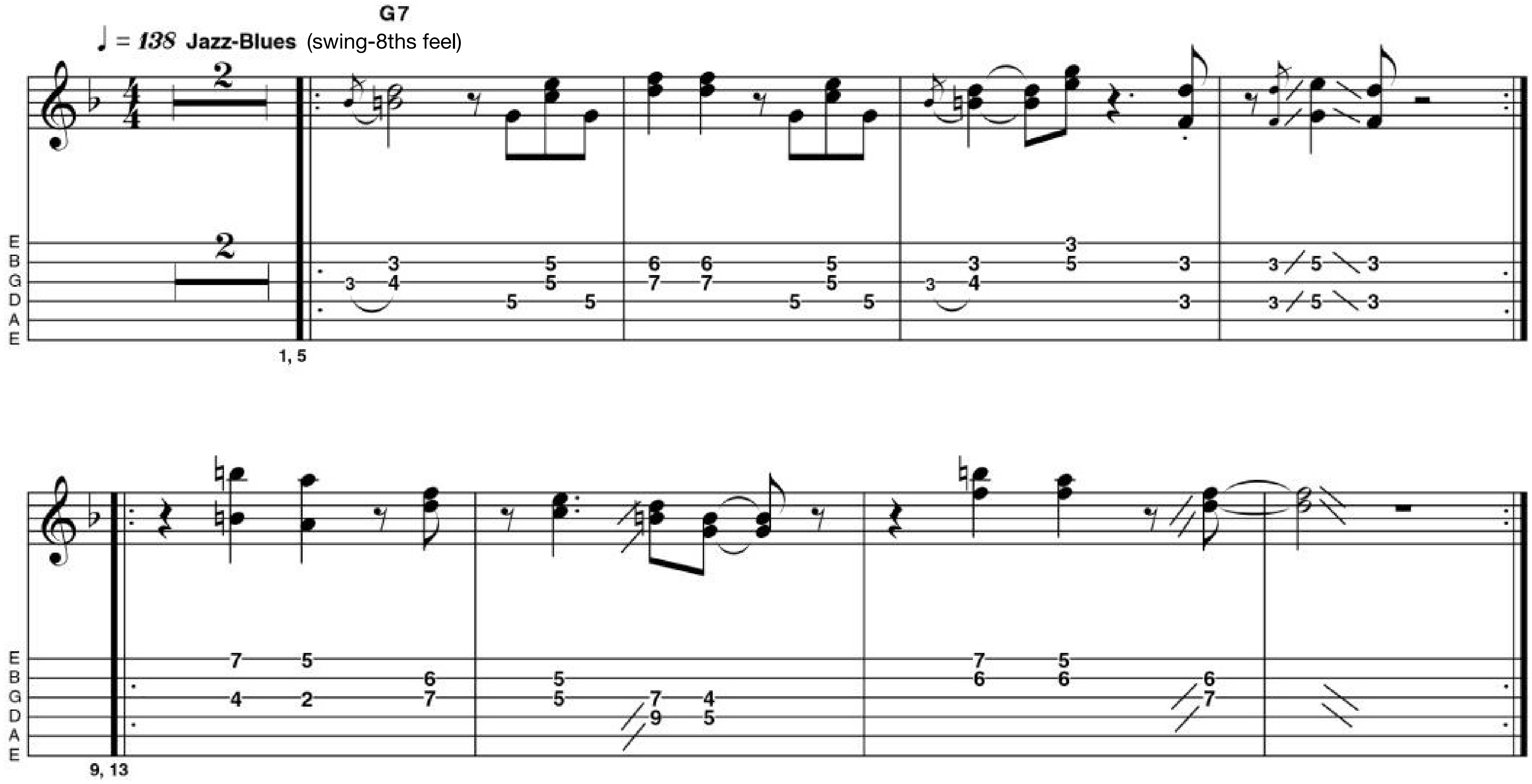
Building upon this strummed octaves idea, **Ex. 1c** adds a note that's either a perfect 5th or 4th above each low melody note, producing a subtle and harmonically rich variation that has a "throaty" and sort of "power-chord-like" quality that brings to mind the sound of an electric organ and its prominent overtones. George Benson and Grant Green have made great use of this root-5th or root-5th-octave harmonization technique in many of their guitar solos. Be sure to barre the notes played at the same frets on the top two strings with your pinkie.

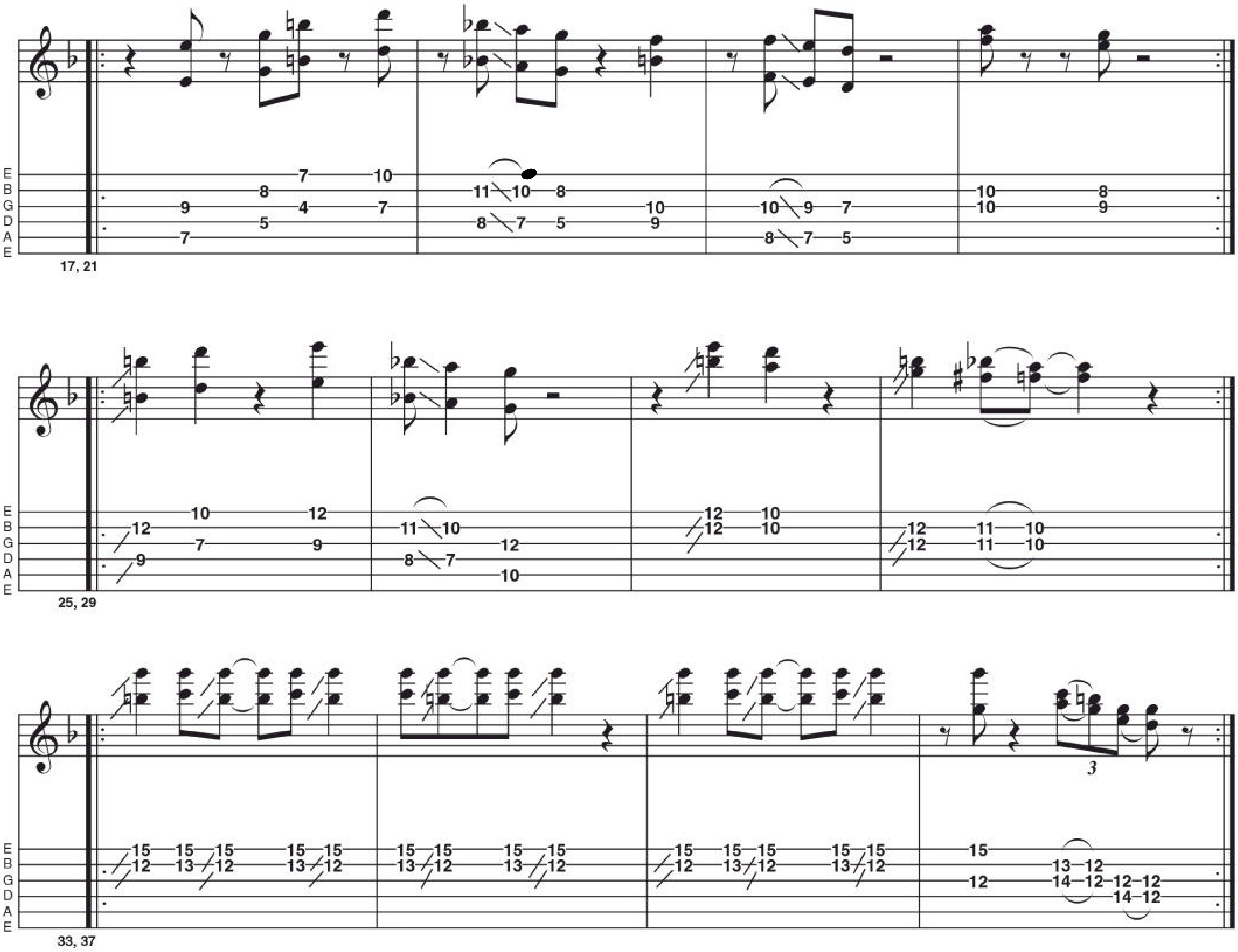
Inspired by Kenny Burrell, **Ex. 1d** takes our foundational minor pentatonic melody and instead harmonizes it in major and minor 3rds. This adds an additional "color tone" to the minor pentatonic scale — the major 6th, B, which is played above the G note — implying the interesting sound of the D Dorian mode (D, E, F, G, A, B, C). This approach can be highly useful in many minor-key contexts.

Finally, like the three-note, root-5th-octave "stacks" we looked at in Ex. 1c, **Ex. 1e** takes a similar approach with three-note chords, one that's more edgy and modern sounding, inspired by the styles of players like Robben Ford and Joe Dioro. Here, each note of our foundational melody, which has been slightly altered, has two 4ths stacked above it (a 4th and a 4th above that note), producing what's known as *quartal harmony*. For added dissonance, the lower two notes can be altered chromatically, as demonstrated in bar 2. Actually, in this case, the focus shifts to the top note, which can serve as your guiding melody note. When utilizing this approach, you can think of the highest note as being harmonized below with a pair of 4ths that form a "sub-stack."

Ex. 2 presents a variety of jazz-blues-style double-stop ideas, which are great for playing over many dominant 7 chords. These are all in the style of George Benson, and I've given an idea for each of the five CAGED shapes, so that you will always have one to work from. Experiment with transposing these licks and phrases to other keys and using them over a blues progression, as well as over static dominant-7 chord vamps. I also recommend writing your own double-stop riffs for each position.

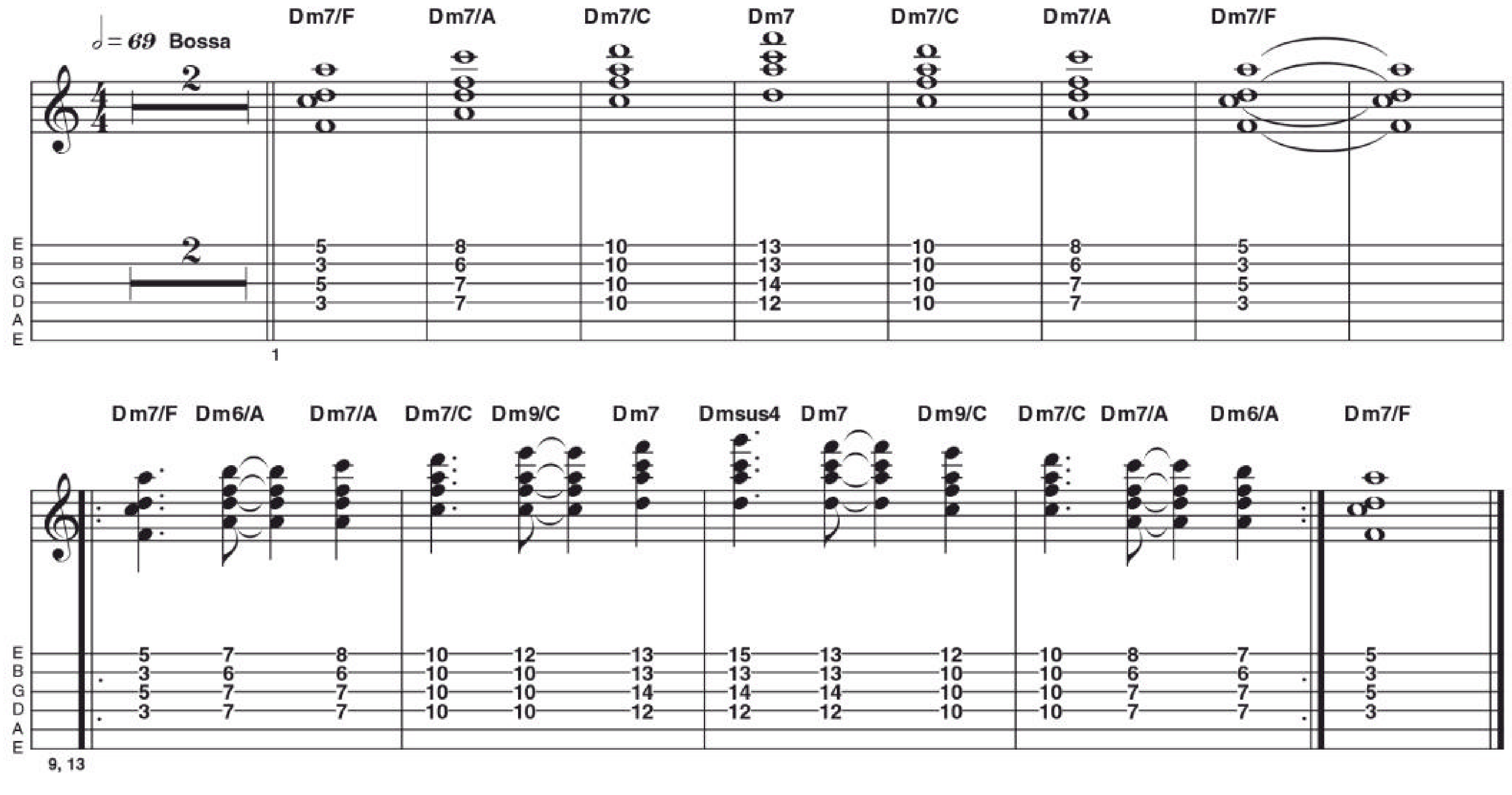
Ex. 2 Dominant 7th Bluesy Doublestops based on CAGED





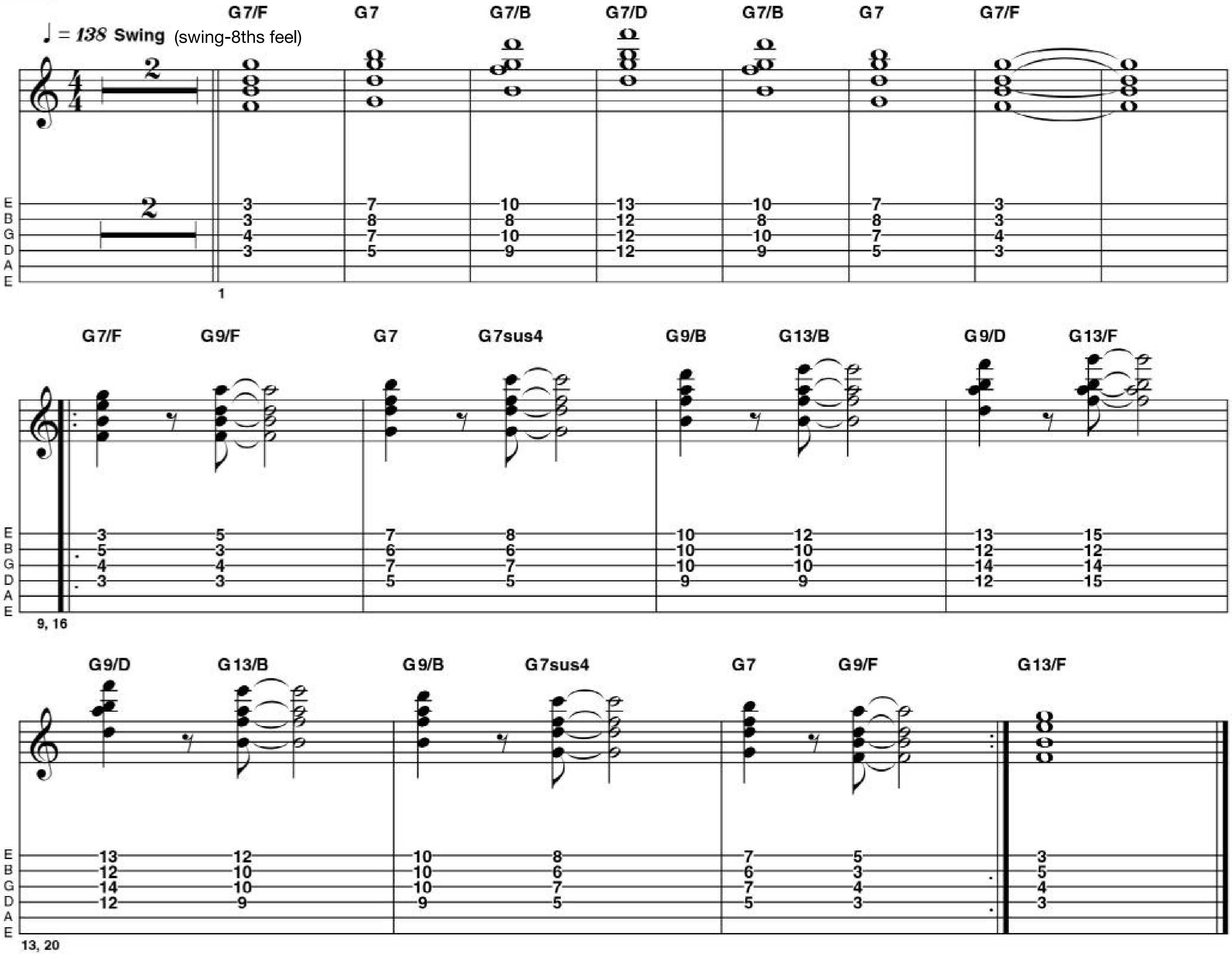
17, 21
25, 29
33, 37
3

Ex. 3 Minor 7th Inversions and Harmonization

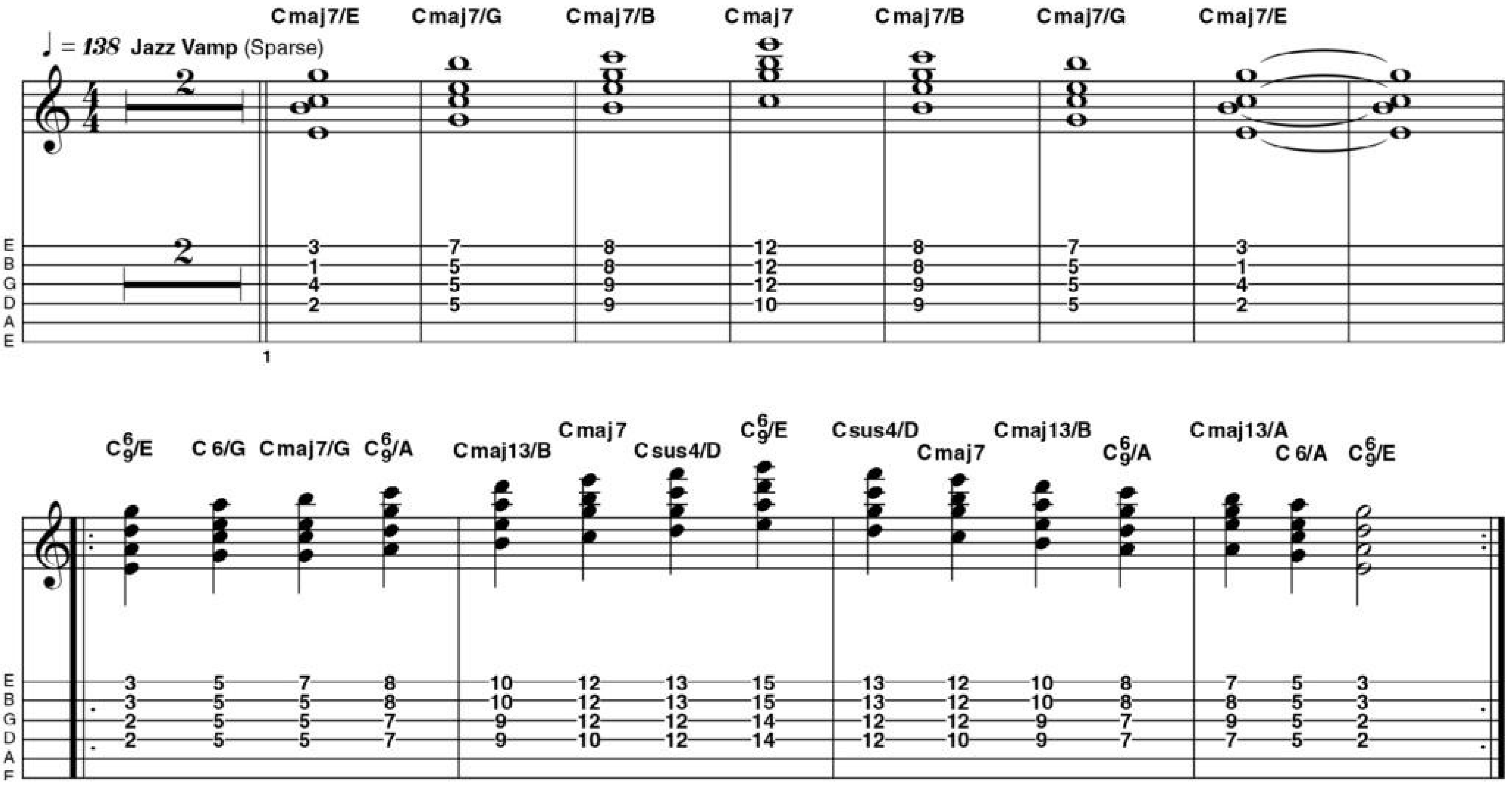


𝅗𝅥 = 69 Bossa
2
Dm7/F
Dm7/A
Dm7/C
Dm7
Dm7/C
Dm7/A
Dm7/F
1
Dm7/F
Dm6/A
Dm7/A
Dm7/C
Dm9/C
Dm7
Dmsus4
Dm7
Dm9/C
Dm7/C
Dm7/A
Dm6/A
Dm7/F
9, 13

Ex. 4 Dominant 7th Inversions and Harmonization


♩ = 138 Swing (swing-8ths feel)
G7/F
G7
G7/B
G7/D
G7/B
G7
G7/F
G7/F
G9/F
G7
G7sus4
G9/B
G13/B
G9/D
G13/F
G9/D
G13/B
G9/B
G7sus4
G7
G9/F
G13/F
1
9, 16
13, 20

Ex. 5 Major 7th Inversions and Harmonization


♩ = 138 Jazz Vamp (Sparse)
Cmaj7/E
Cmaj7/G
Cmaj7/B
Cmaj7
Cmaj7/B
Cmaj7/G
Cmaj7/E
C6/9/E
C6/G
Cmaj7/G
C6/9/A
Cmaj13/B
Cmaj7
Csus4/D
C6/9/E
Csus4/D
Cmaj7
Cmaj13/B
C6/9/A
Cmaj13/A
C6/A
C6/9/E
1

In order to solo with chords effectively, one needs to know several chord types everywhere on the fretboard, so let's be thorough and dig deep into some fundamental chord qualities: minor 7, dominant 7 and major 7. The better we know these chord types and their various shapes, the more fluently we can navigate a range of progressions, and even harmonize any melody with any chord, which is a great goal. For further study, be sure to check out the ballad-playing styles of Joe Pass, Charlie Byrd and Wes Montgomery for inspiring examples of this sort of approach.

In our last examples this month, we'll look at minor 7, dominant 7 and major 7 harmonization. **Ex. 3** shows every available inversion of a Dm7 chord played on the top four strings, followed by how they can be used and altered slightly to harmonize an ascending and descending D Dorian melody on the 1st string. (The D Dorian mode "agrees with" a Dm7 chord beautifully.)

Ex. 4 similarly shows the inversions for a G7 chord on the top four strings, followed again by the harmonization of an ascending and descending scale, this time the G Mixolydian mode (G, A, B, C, D, E, F) with a simple rhythm. Note that G Mixolydian and D Dorian are built from the very same seven notes, as they are both relative modes of what would be considered the "parent" C major scale, or C Ionian mode (C, D, E, F, G, A, B). Again, practice transposing this information to other keys, as well.

Finally, **Ex. 5** presents the available inversions for a Cmaj7 chord on this same string group. For the harmonizations, I've used some alternative voicings employing maj6, 6/9 and maj13 chords, partly because the first chord, the utterly beautiful Cmaj7/E, is quite tricky to grab on the fly. You'll find these solutions to be more agile. In addition, Cmaj7/B (with the C in the melody and B in the bass) is quite a spiky chord, so I've offered the softer C6/9 with the A in the bass as an alternative. Note that all of these chords "live within" the C major scale and provide a general "happy" major diatonicism. You might find, as I do, that using small two- and three-string partial barres with your fretting hand is easier than trying to finger every string with a different fingertip. Experiment with what works for you, especially given the speed of some chord changes.

We'll be back next month to explore working in fundamental modes and their harmonic contexts, and we'll look at some useful and harmonically appropriate solutions for navigating the jazz style's essential major and minor ii - V progressions all over the fretboard. See you then!

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Marr's Attacks

Blur the lines between lead and rhythm playing with arpeggiated chords, open-string licks and unusual chord progressions in the style of Johnny Marr.

BY PATRICK BRENNAN

THOUGH THE SMITHS lasted a mere five years, from 1982 to '87, they may be one of the most influential rock acts of their time. Much of this acclaim stems from the indelible fretwork of guitarist Johnny Marr. Influenced by everything and everyone from Motown to Jimi Hendrix to African highlife music, Marr's playing shifted the focus from the massive blues-based riffs of '70s rock guitar to a more nuanced approach that combined the chime of '60s jangle-pop bands with the pared-down musicality of players like Nile Rodgers and Keith Richards. After the Smiths' breakup, Marr went on to play with Talking Heads, Billy Bragg and Pet Shop Boys, among others, and launched a successful solo career, influencing guitarists like Jonny Greenwood and Noel Gallagher.

In this month's style lesson, we'll break down the elements essential to Marr's eclectic approach, including his use of elements such as open strings, arpeggios, rhythmic syncopation and melodically layered chord progressions. Since this lesson leans heavily on chord voicings and fretboard movement, be sure to note the picking/strumming and fret-hand fingering prompts included in each of these examples.

MARR'S RHYTHM GUITAR

Being the Smiths' sole guitarist, Marr had a lot of sonic ground to cover. In the studio, he could overdub multiple guitar parts to achieve the multilayered textures he wanted, but onstage, he had to combine the essence of rhythm and lead textures into his playing (although the Smiths did add a second guitarist on their final tour). To do so, Marr would seamlessly meld both lead and rhythm guitar when he played. Part of his genius was in writing rhythm parts that incorporated functional melodies within them, and crafting leads that retained the necessary harmony that a rhythm guitar would normally provide.

Ex. 1 demonstrates this kind of integrative approach to rhythm guitar. Inspired by the intro to the Smiths' "Cemetry Gates" (*The Queen Is Dead*), the example utilizes an upbeat 16th-note rhythm guitar pattern with a simple but catchy melodic motif woven into it. We start by playing a standard open C chord before moving into a far less standard Dadd4-9/A (voiced, low to high: A, F♯, G, D, E). You make this transition by simply taking the C chord shape and moving it up a whole step (two frets) on the neck while removing your 3rd finger from the A string, leaving it open, along with the G and high E strings. You then head into bar 2 playing an open Gmaj7 chord (voiced G, D, G, B, F♯). As you strum this chord, alternate the high F♯ note, played at the 2nd fret on the high E string, with the open E note, momentarily transforming the chord to G6 (voiced G, D, G, B, E). Adding this simple but effective melodic motif on top of the chord progression gives an otherwise okay-sounding rhythm part an additional layer of interest.

Informed by one of Marr's finest solo tunes, "New Town Velocity" (*The Messenger*), **Ex. 2** delves deeper into this concept. Throughout the figure, you alternate between strumming open chords on the beats and picking out single notes on the eighth-note upbeats, forming a descending melody on top of the chords, all in 1st position. These single notes are played above each chord while you hold the lower chord tones.

We begin by strumming Am7 (voiced A, E, G, C) on beat 1, then add the single notes G (high E string, 3rd fret), open high E and D (B string, 3rd fret) on the upbeats, or "and" counts of beats 2, 3 and 4. From there we switch to an open Em7 chord (voiced E, B, E, G, D) and

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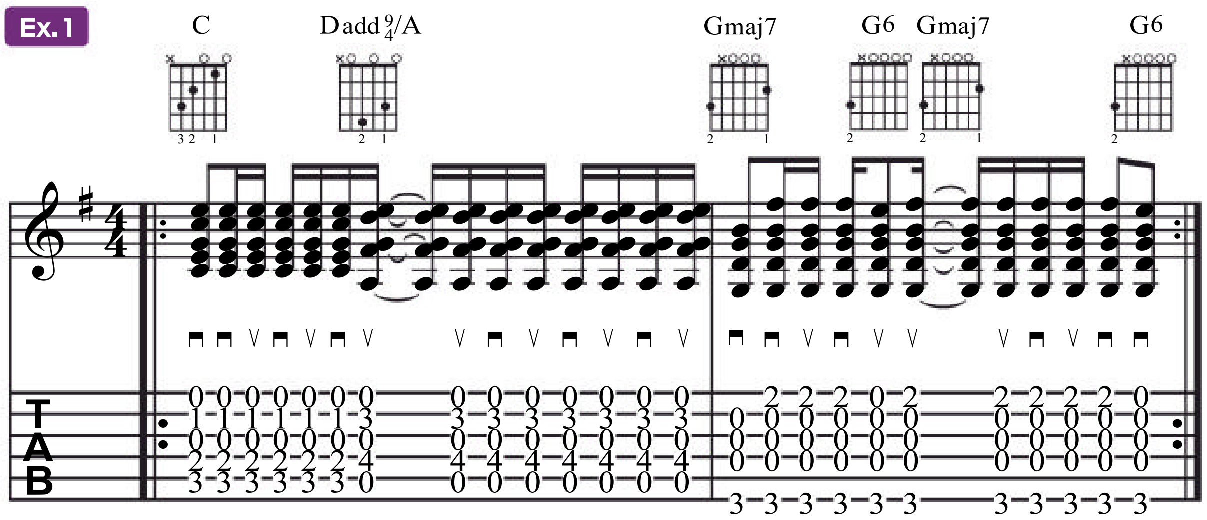
continue adding high melody notes in a similar fashion. In bar 3, we shift the melodic pattern slightly: Over an open G chord, fretted with the 2nd and 3rd fingers on the bottom two strings, we proceed to "walk down" the B string starting from D at the 3rd fret to C at the 1st fret, which we then pull off to the open B note, followed by A on the 2nd fret of the G string. In the final bar, we strum the power chord D5/A (voiced A, D, A) for the first two beats, with only the open A note taking the place of the strummed chord on beats 3 and 4, as the melody descends and crosses over to the D string with the notes F and E at the 3rd and 2nd frets.

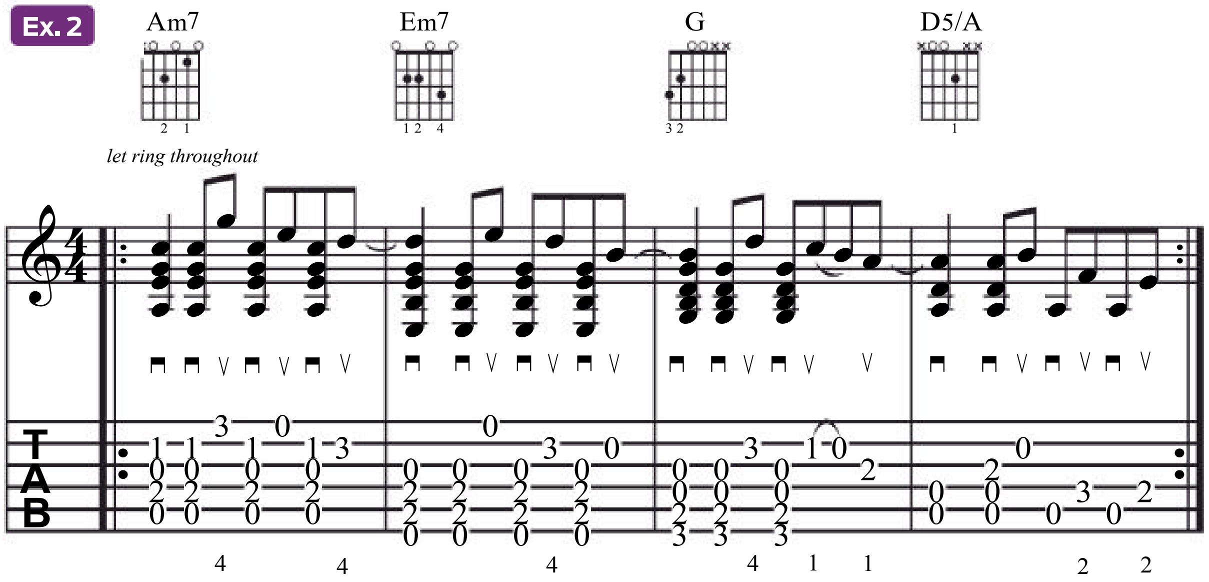
Two additional hallmarks of Marr's approach to rhythm guitar are his use of 7th chords and 16th-note syncopations, both of which helped produce the kind of unique, almost jazzy sounds that set the Smiths apart from their rock contemporaries. Inspired by the band's masterpiece "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now" (*Hatful of Hollow*), **Ex. 3** starts with an Emaj7 chord (voiced E, B, D♯, G♯) strummed in a funky, staccato fashion that evokes the rhythm playing style of one of Marr's biggest influences, legendary funk and disco pioneer Nile Rodgers. When strumming, keep your pick hand moving back and forth across the strings in a flowing, unbroken down-up-down-up motion, even during the rests. (This highly useful technique is called *16th-note pendulum strumming*, and it's the key to making riffs like this groove and feel "in the pocket.")

Strum this rhythm through the next two bars as you shift to C7 (voiced C, B♭, E, G), and A6 (voiced A, A, C♯, F♯). As you enter bar 4, hold on the chord F9 (voiced F, A, E♭, G), then play a funky, sliding triple-stop lick through beats 3 and 4. Barre your 1st finger across the top three strings at the 8th fret, then slide up a whole step to the 10th fret and continue strumming in 16th notes. On beat 4, mute the strings by releasing your fret-hand grip on them, letting the index finger gently sit on the strings to keep them from ringing out as you shift back down to the 8th fret on the second 16th note of the final beat. Once you

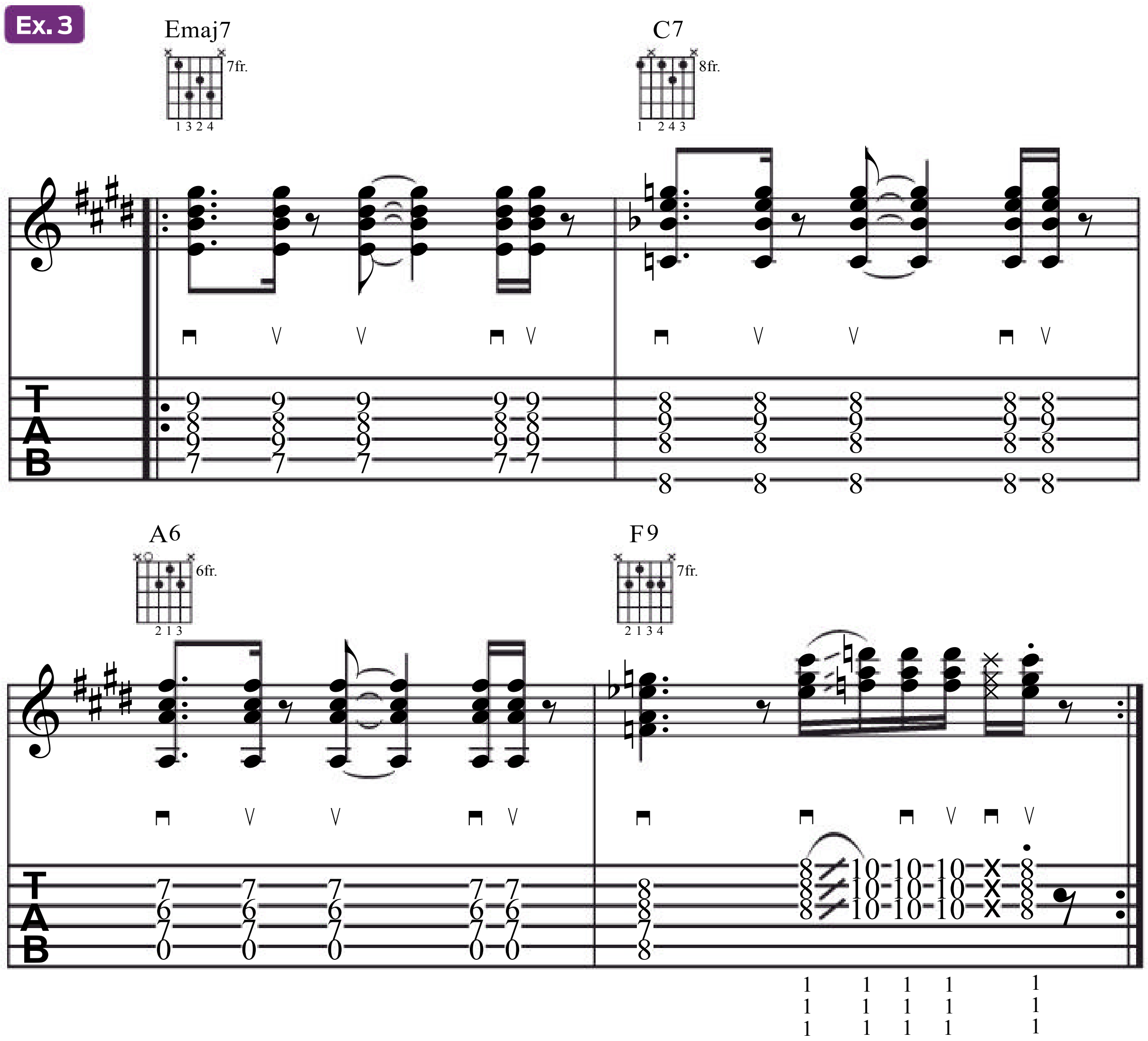
Ex. 1



Ex. 2



Ex. 3



have these techniques down, it's time to move on and tackle Marr's lead sound.

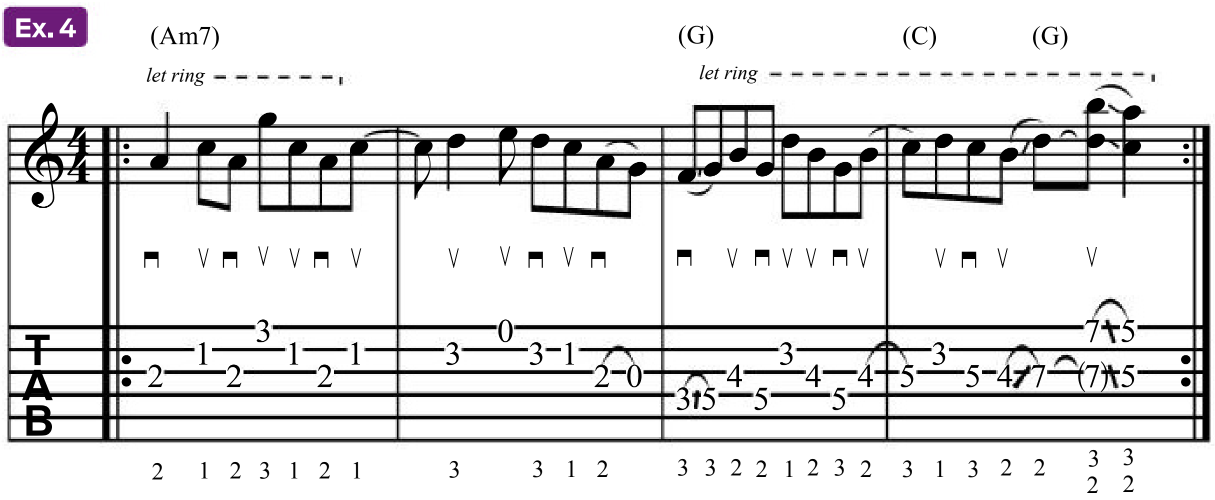
MARR'S ARPEGGIOS

Like the Pretenders' James Honeyman-Scott and Siouxsie and the Banshees' John McGeoch, Marr rejected the notion that guitar leads needed to be showy and bombastic to be impressive and impactful. He played lines as catchy as any of Morrissey's swooning vocal melodies while providing the harmonic support a rhythm guitarist would normally supply. Marr often did this by building his single-note parts around *arpeggios* — chords broken up into single notes — and using scale tones to melodically stitch everything together.

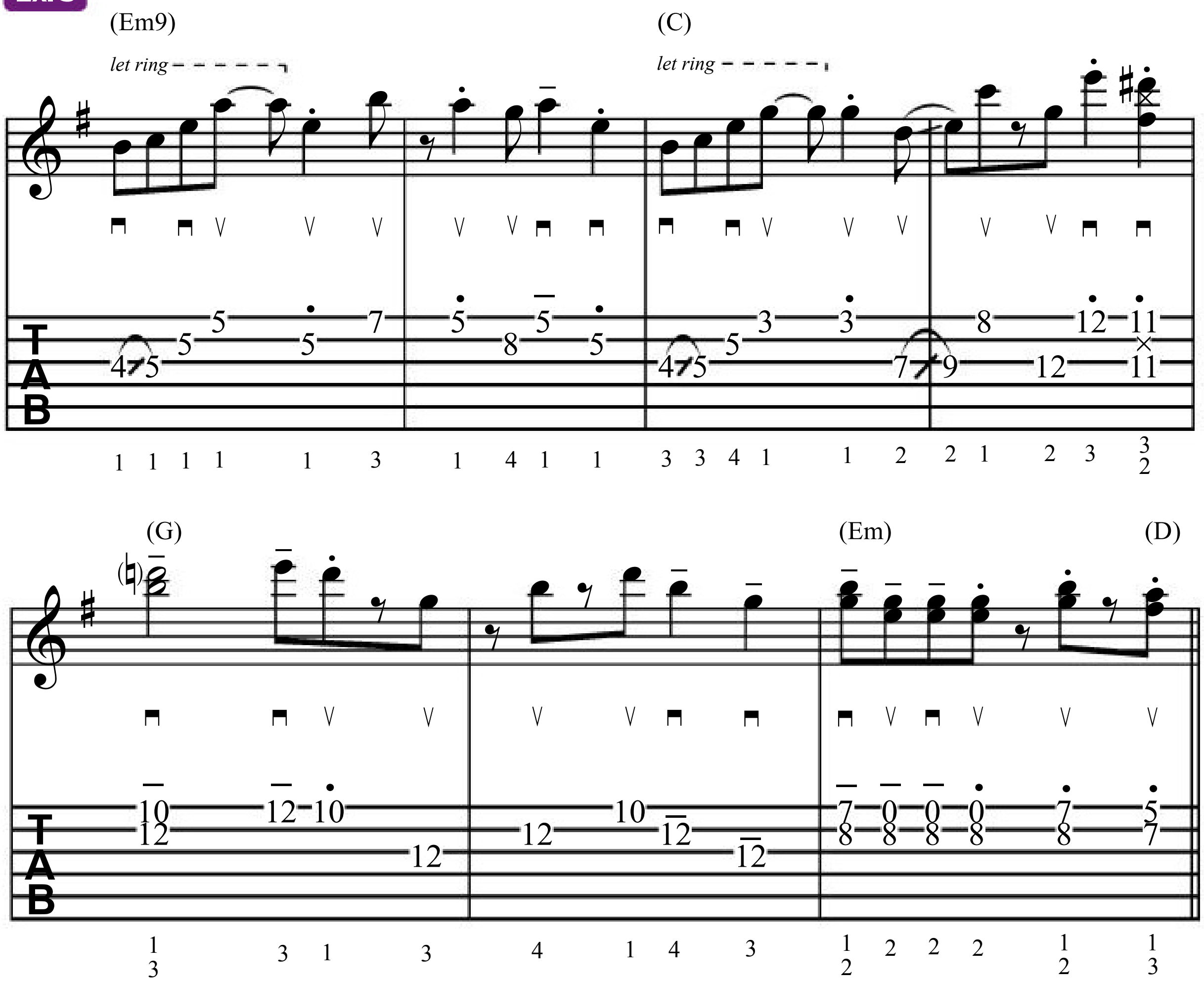
Taking cues from the Smiths' classic "Still Ill" (*The Smiths*), **Ex. 4** begins with an arpeggiated open Am7 chord shape, with each chord tone ringing out until you hit the C note on the "and" of beat 4 in bar 1. From there you play an ascending and descending melodic line based on the A minor pentatonic scale (A, C, D, E, G). In bar 3, slide from F on the D string's 3rd fret up two frets, to G, which becomes the root of an arpeggiated G major chord (G, B, D), played in eighth notes that ring together and fill out the rest of the bar. At the end of bar 4, a couple of legato finger slides are used in conjunction with sliding 6th intervals to create a sweet, slippery-sounding ending to the phrase. The use of triads and dyads in this example is demonstrative of Marr's melodic approach to chord movement. Instead of simply strumming chords, he'll break them up into single notes and connect them together via melodic phrasing.

Next we will look at the influence of African highlife music on Marr's playing. Highlife is driven by one or more guitarists playing parts based on syncopated arpeggios and dyads (two-note chords), typically using diatonic 3rds or 6ths. Considered by many to be one of the guitarist's greatest musical achievements with the Smiths, the single "This Charming Man" is the song most heavily influenced by highlife guitar work and features some of Marr's most technically challenging playing.

Ex. 4



Ex. 5



Ex. 5 uses a similarly fashioned highlife-style syncopated uptempo eighth-note feel and arpeggiated approach. Note the use of legato finger slides in bars 1, 3 and 4, which lend expressiveness to the figure. When playing this example, also notice the varying articulations and durations indicated for certain notes. Some are to be held as long as possible, or played *tenuto*, as indicated by a horizontal dash over the note, while others are played short, or *staccato*, indicated by a dot. The push and pull of these two contrasting articulations is the key to achieving the intended feel and phrasing of the example.

OPENING UP

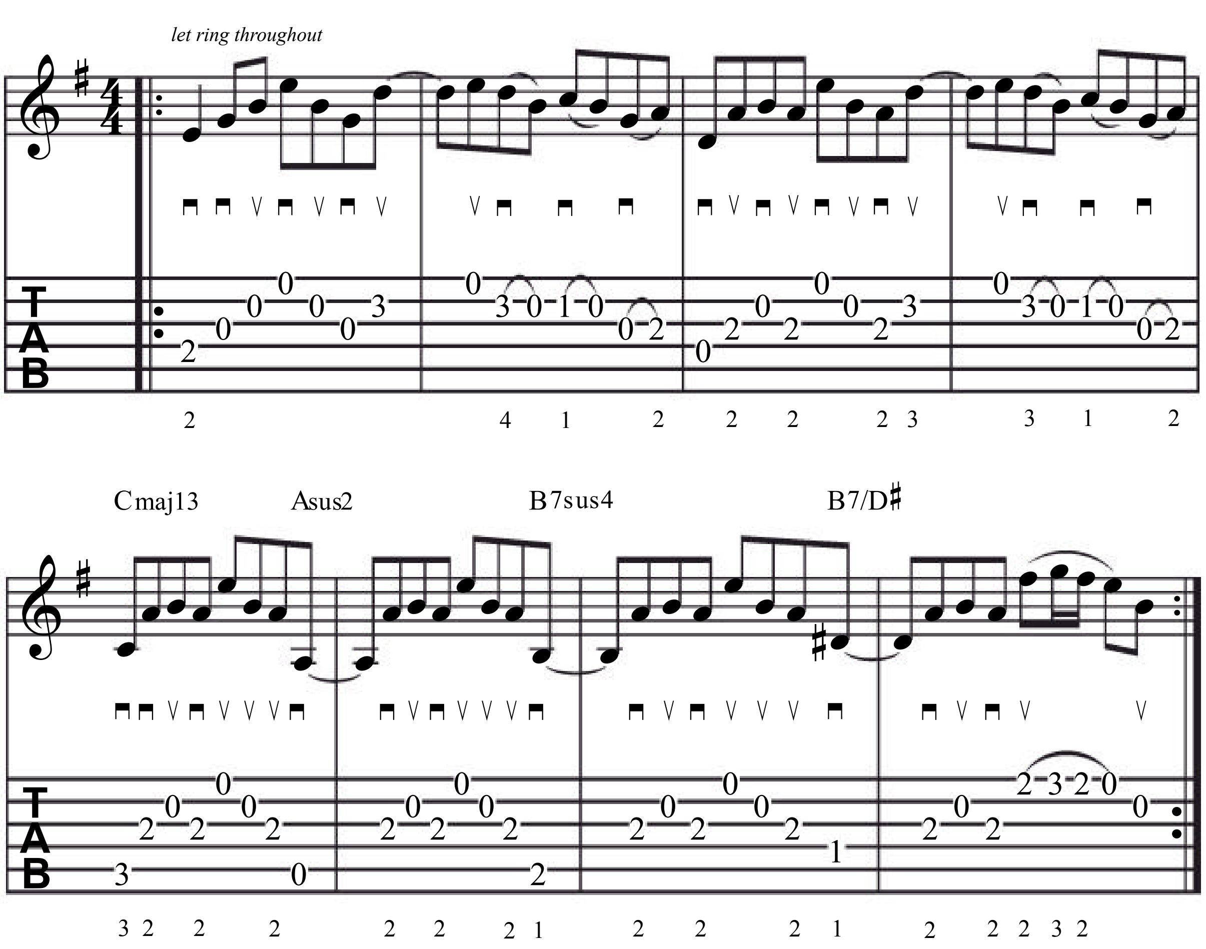
Another device Marr loves to utilize is the use of open strings. **Ex. 6** is a flowing eighth-note riff inspired by his playing in "Hand in Glove" (*The Smiths*), and driven by open-chord arpeggios with shared common tones (tones that are shared between neighboring chords) that ring throughout. Again, notice how foundational open-chord shapes are held and allowed to ring while being embellished with both open and fretted notes on the higher strings. The combination hammer-on and double pull-off in the final bar can be a bit tricky to perform smoothly and cleanly, so practice it slowly at first, using the prescribed fret-hand fingerings and striving to make these slurred notes project loudly and clearly.

Ex. 7 is inspired by one of the Smiths' poppiest singles, "Ask." While this track is notable for featuring a massive number of separate guitar parts intertwining to create an almost orchestral sound, we'll be focusing on one technique Marr employed to great effect in this song: the open-string *pedal point*. A pedal point is a single note that's either sustained or rearticulated with a series of chords, arpeggios or melody notes. In this derivative example, you'll see the open high E string used as the pedal point throughout. Notice how two- and three-note fretted chord and/or arpeggio shapes are pitted against the open E note, which enriches both the harmonic color and texture of the line, especially with the B♭add♯11 and G6 arpeggios in bars 3 and 4. Also, note the use of economy picking in these bars, which helps make all the string crosses sound and feel smoother than they would if you attempted to use strict alternate picking here.

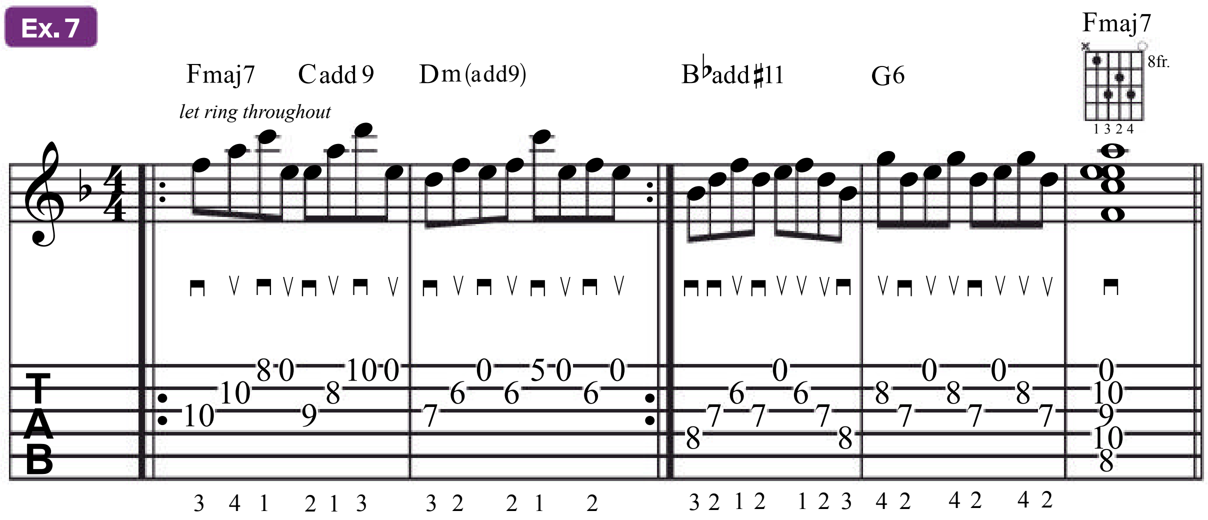
Finally, let's take this open-string idea to its logical conclusion. **Ex. 8** is performed in open D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, F♯, A, D) and is a reworking of one of Marr's greatest musical moments, the main riff from the Smiths' "The Headmaster Ritual" (*Meat Is Murder*). Here, we're playing mostly on the bottom three strings and adding color tones at the 3rd and 5th frets to the foundational open D5 chord (voiced D, A, D), with the C note on the 5th string's 3rd fret providing the minor, or "flatted," 7th (♭7), and the hammered-on G note at the 5th fret on the 4th string supplying the "add4," which lends an exotic flavor to the part. As with some of the previous examples, notice again the sprightly picking pattern and frequent string crosses, which lend rhythmic flair and energy to the figure.

Be sure to try playing any of these examples with a capo, placed at various frets, to transpose everything up to a higher and brighter-sounding key, as Marr himself is often inclined to do. ■

Ex.6

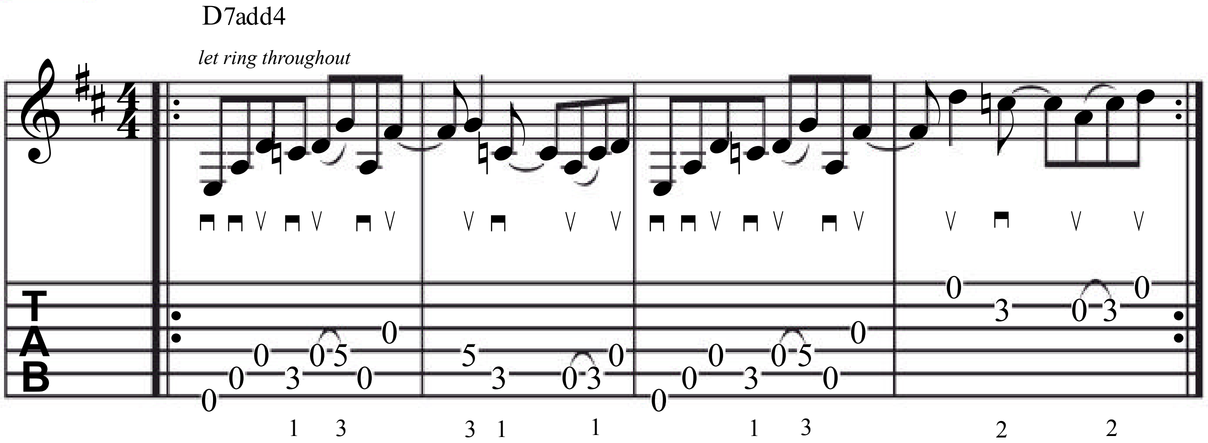


Ex.7



Ex.8

Open D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, F♯, A, D)



Path to Finger Freedom

Part 3: How to pluck without a pick.

BY JIMMY LESLIE

123DUCU/GETTY IMAGES

THESE RECENT LEARN columns have been preparation for a launch into the glorious fingerstyle galaxy. It's a world away from playing with a plectrum, or even hybrid picking, because the powerful thumb and index finger are now available as primary pluckers. New learning curves lie around every corner, but the immediate goal is to use the thumb or index fingernail like a plectrum to strum a chord or pluck a succession of single notes as we work toward tackling multi-digit picking patterns.

HANG LOOSE

A fingerstylist may approach the strings from wildly different angles at times, but there's always some root position. Your own "hand hang" boils down to what feels most comfortable in your primary style. For example, a classical hand approaches the strings from a practically perpendicular angle, whereas it's nearly parallel in a traditional folk approach. Most of us wind up striking a balance between the two, and that's what we'll focus on here. Keep a relaxed feel all the way up through your shoulders. A stiff body equals stiff music.

EXAMINE THE ANGLE OF THE DANGLE

For those who are new to extended or fake nails, first decide what shape you need, then examine the plucking angle. I find the most natural plucking feel comes from a standard teardrop nail shape that extends a short way beyond the fingertips, and is perhaps slightly longer on the first three digits, as they do most of the heavy lifting. Interestingly, the pointer fingernail works quite well for ripping off single-note runs. The trick to a strong yet fast-flowing attack lies in the angle of the dangle. Approaching a string from the side yields a brushy, soft attack. A steep hand angle leads to classical territory, where plucking upward happens readily, but not much else does.

KEEP A RELAXED FEEL. A STIFF BODY EQUALS STIFF MUSIC

HOW TO PICK AND STRUM WITH YOUR POINTER FINGERNAIL

For a versatile approach, pretend to hold a small pick between your thumb and index finger. Now move the thumb upward and press it against the outside of the index finger so that the thumb tucks in at the first joint. Use the pointer fingernail to attack the strings at about a 45-degree angle, swiping away from your body on the downstroke and returning along the same path for an upstroke or nonstroke. Use a tight motion for single notes and a larger swipe for strumming, as if you're shaking a drop of water off the hand. Once you're accustomed to it, this technique feels similar to picking and strumming with a plectrum. The attack is slightly different, but a happy medium can be found, so experiment. The index fingernail attack will be quite strong once you learn how to make the most of the nail's edge, which is why a good file job is crucial. Utilize the far edge on the downstroke and the closer edge on the upstroke. You can always modify into a straight up-and-down motion to emphasize a particular part. Need more torque? The thumbnail is the most powerful.

THUMB IT DOWN

For a robust pluck or strum, rotate the hand toward the neck a bit, and anchor it with the fingers on the far side of the sound hole so that the thumb is free to flow straight up and down. The thumbnail downstroke is now at your service to strum chords or pluck single-note passages with gusto, as long as the tempo isn't so fast as to require upstrokes. That's a difficult discipline bass players refer to as "double thumbing," and it's mostly a fleshy affair involving no significant nail length. Utilize a more traditional hand angle to use the thumb as a foundation for multi-string plucking patterns. The key is getting a good "hook" with the outside of the thumbnail for a strong attack that can be released quickly as it moves on to the next task.

The thumb is awesome for an array of fingerstyle applications. Refer back to the August 2020 issue for a Learn column devoted entirely to making the most of it.

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DUO 2.2
TRES 3.0
TRES 3.1
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Fender

LEAD II AND LEAD III

TESTED BY MATT BLACKETT

THE FENDER LEAD series is a little bit like the Beatles' U.S. *Yesterday and Today* album, or Queen's *Innuendo*, or Led Zeppelin's *In Through the Out Door*. It might not be your favorite thing they've ever done, but it's really good and holds up far better after all these years than we might have thought back in the day. And that is a great thing.

To say Fender has been embracing its past of late is somewhat laughable. This is, after all, a company that is defined by its history. But when we think of Fender's most noteworthy guitars, we obviously think about the Strat and Tele, making it easy to overlook or outright dismiss variations on those themes. But the fact is, Fender had a bunch of interesting designs along the way, and we're seeing the rebirth and renewed appreciation of many of those guitars,

SPECIFICATIONS

Lead II
CONTACT fender.com
PRICE $599 street

NUT WIDTH 1.65"
NECK Maple
FRETBOARD Maple, 25.5" scale with 9.5" radius
FRETS 22 medium jumbo
TUNERS Fender Vintage "F" stamped
BODY Alder
BRIDGE 6-saddle string-through body hardtail with block saddles
PICKUPS Two Player Series Alnico V Strat single-coils
CONTROLS Master volume, master tone, 3-way selector, phase switch
FACTORY STRINGS Fender NPS .009–.042
WEIGHT 8 lbs.
BUILT Mexico

KUDOS Slick playability. Unique tones. Great value
CONCERNS Tones might be too unique for some

Lead II

Lead III

including the Lead II and Lead III, two cool twists on the Strat legacy.

Gear historians may remember Steve Morse in the original ads for the Lead series. I noticed that those guitars had at least three fewer pickups than Morse's Tele of that time. But if a badass like Steve could dig it enough to be in an ad for it, there must be something there. So I unboxed these two guitars with all the late-'70s/early '80s enthusiasm my aging 2020 body could muster.

LEAD II

This scaled-down Strat-style body sports a pair of Alnico V Strat single-coils and two stout toggle switches: a three-position for pickup selection and a two-position phase switch. This initially struck me as a very non-'80s design, but once I plugged it in, I rethought that assumption. After all, Gary Moore, Ritchie Blackmore and others got massive tones in that decade with nary a humbucker in sight, and there were obviously a lot of great players who didn't play rock during that time.

Using a Victoria 1x12 combo and my trusty Kemper rig for amplification, I plugged it in. These single-coils have healthy output that leans on the bright side. I suspect this is accentuated by the Alnico V magnets and by the pickups' treble-side tilt. (I personally would have liked a Jake E. Lee–approved slant in the opposite direction.) I dialed in both amps for more lows and less highs and dug in. This is a very lively guitar, with a comfy C-shaped neck and a resonant alder body. The hardtail bridge and string-through design add to that feel and sound. The bridge pickup delivers a cutting, focused tone. The neck pickup can do the SRV/Jimi Strat thing, but not exactly. Maybe it's the angle, but it has its own tone. The middle position is where you really get the otherness of the Lead II. Because of the pickup's position, this is definitely more Tele than Strat, and it can almost sound like a big, spread-out humbucker (the reverse-wound/reverse-polarity wiring means it is a humbucker, although obviously not a conventional one). It's a cool, funky sound that works great clean or dirty, with the pickups in phase.

SPECIFICATIONS

Lead III

PRICE $599 street

NUT WIDTH 1.65"

NECK Maple

FRETBOARD Pau Ferro, 25.5" scale with 9.5" radius

FRETS 22 medium jumbo

TUNERS Vintage style

BODY Alder

BRIDGE 6-saddle string-through body hardtail with block saddles

PICKUPS Two Player Series Alnico 2 humbuckers

CONTROLS Master volume, master tone, 3-way selector, coil-split switch

FACTORY STRINGS Fender NPS .009–.042

WEIGHT 8.1 lbs.

BUILT Mexico

KUDOS Good range of tones. Plays well. Tremendous value

CONCERNS None

Which brings us to the phase switch. I'm a fan of Brian May, and he certainly knows phase switching. The esteemed Dr. May once told me that what he liked about the out-of-phase tones on his Red Special was that the tone was "pure harmonic, with almost no fundamental." Which is what you get when you hit the Lead II's phase switch. This is not a tone most players will use in most situations, but it is a tone you can't get any other way. Hollow, nasal and thin — and I mean all that in a good way — this could be the perfect overdub in the studio or a big attention grabber live, and it so embodies what May described. When I tapped harmonics 12 frets up from a chord in the ninth position, they sounded two octaves up from the fundamental! Shocked, I tried again and quickly moved the phase switch back and forth, hearing the harmonics jump up and down in octaves. Wow!

Because the out-of-phase sounds are so unique, I found the tone control really helped make them more useful. If you need bright and hollow, they will do that, no problem, but by rolling the tone control back, I got many more-normal and very musical sounds.

LEAD III

Moving to the Lead III was sort of like a warm hug or a homecoming. A two-humbucker Strat-shaped guitar? That I can relate to. You still get the easy playability that the comfy neck and 9.5-inch radius afford you, plus two toggles for pickup selection and coil splitting. Players who want a slightly smaller Strat-style body with conventional pickup options might very well find this guitar is their jam.

The Alnico 2 humbuckers are full and distinct, with what sounds like medium output to me. I loved what they did to the Victoria's front end, and into the Kemper I could make this guitar do almost anything. I'm not the biggest fan of splitting humbuckers, not because I don't like the sound but because half a humbucker does not a single-coil make. But splitting these pickups gave rise to some cool tones. Going between humbucker and split sounds is actually a really effective way to accentuate the dynamics between a chorus and a verse, and the Lead III can do that, and do it well.

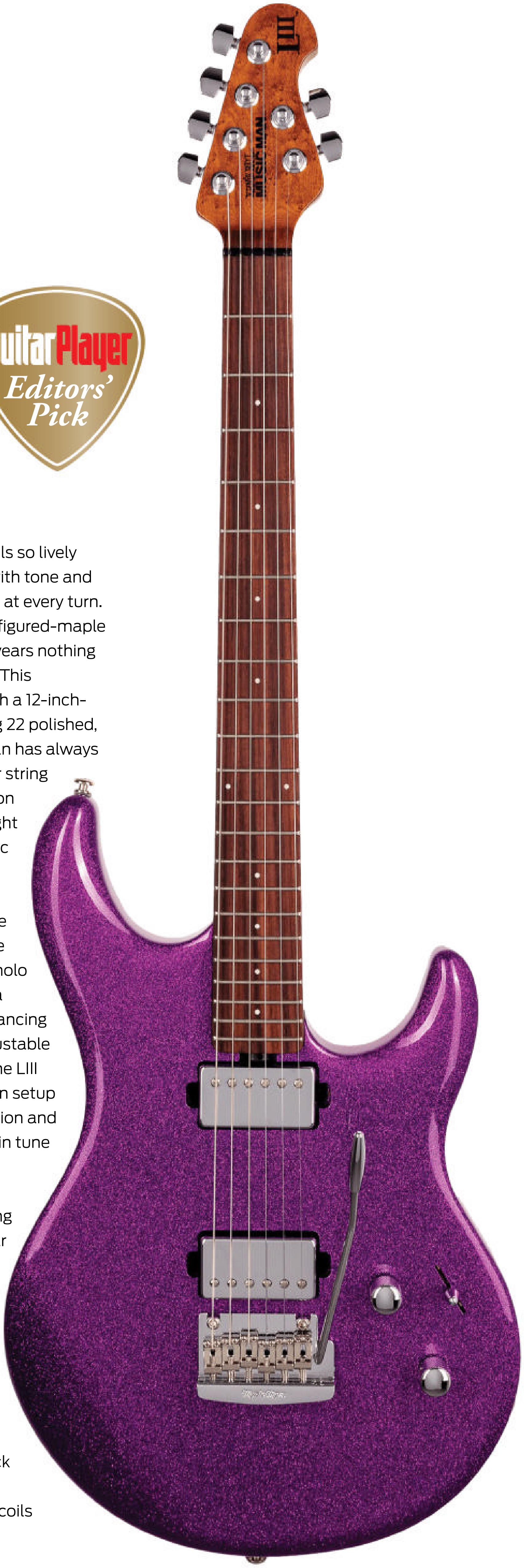
When you factor in the price points of these two instruments, they are insane deals by any measure. Neither the Lead II nor Lead III will be exactly like a Strat or a Tele, but that's the point. If you want some version of those two iconic guitars, I'm pretty sure Fender will be willing to sell you that. But if you want to get your Fender on but in your own way (and in a way that maybe not everyone else is doing), take a look at the Leads. You can Lead, or you can follow.

Ernie Ball Music Man

LIII HH

Guitar Player Editors' Pick

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON



IT'S HARD TO believe Steve Lukather has been consistently playing his namesake Music Man guitars since 1993. Although it was initially equipped with two single-coil pickups and one humbucker (HSS), in 2012 a twin-humbucking model designated the HH was added and has been available ever since. Lukather calls this signature model "a hybrid of an old Les Paul and great Strat," which is on the mark for a guitar that feels so lively and vibrational, and is loaded with tone and playability-enhancing elements at every turn.

Let's start with the roasted, figured-maple neck with a soft V-shape that wears nothing but a thin finish of gunstock oil. This great-feeling stick is topped with a 12-inch-radius rosewood 'board carrying 22 polished, wide low-profile frets. Music Man has always been about maintaining a linear string path, and the .009–.042 wires on our review guitar run ruler-straight over a superbly worked synthetic nut to the 4+2 arrangement of Schaller locking tuners. At the south end, they load through the chunky brass inertia block of the Music Man custom vintage tremolo bridge, which is equipped with a push-in bar and resonance enhancing bent-steel saddles that are adjustable for height, tilt and intonation. The LIII arrived with an expertly dialed-in setup that provided low, buzz-free action and kept things sounding musically in tune throughout the reaches of the fretboard.

Also new are the humbucking pickups, which feature dissimilar magnets under the chrome covers — alnico poles in the bridge and ceramic in the neck positions. The controls are volume and tone and a five-way blade switch that selects the following pickup configurations:

Position 1 (closest to neck): Neck pickup, coils in series.

Position 2: Both pickups, inside coils in parallel

SPECIFICATIONS

LIII HH
CONTACT ernieball.com
PRICE $2,549 street

NUT WIDTH 1.69"
NECK Figured roasted maple, five-bolt sculpted joint
FRETBOARD Rosewood, 25.5" scale with 12" radius
FRETS 22 low-profile wide
TUNERS Schaller M6-IND locking
BODY Alder
BRIDGE Music Man floating vintage tremolo. Chrome plated, hardened steel with bent-steel saddles and push-in arm
PICKUPS Custom Music Man humbuckers with chrome covers (bridge alnico-magnet, neck ceramic-magnet). HSS version has same bridge humbucker and two Cutlass single-coil pickups
CONTROLS Volume (push-push for gain boost), tone (500 kΩ with .022uF capacitor)
FACTORY STRINGS Slinky .009–.042
WEIGHT 8.10 lbs (as tested)
BUILT USA

KUDOS Huge range of tones. Awesome playability
CONCERNS None

Position 3: Neck and bridge pickups in parallel
Position 4" Both pickups, outside coils in parallel
Position 5: Bridge pickup, coils in series

There is also a preamp in this guitar that provides a 12dB boost when the push-push volume knob is in its "up" position (power is supplied by a nine-volt battery housed in a compartment on the back). This handy feature lets you instantly lift a solo above the mix, and it adds to the already stout assortment of sounds that are on tap here.

Tested through a new Mesa/Boogie Mark 5:25 1x10 combo and Fender Deluxe Reverb, the LIII proved very capable of dishing out whatever is needed for the situation. The tones are stellar on the neck pickup, offering nice sustain and a balanced response that sounded excellent in cleaner modes or when pushing into the Boogie set for a singing, Mark I-style solo tone. Then there are the split-coil sounds from positions two and four, which are so rich and chiming that I couldn't help going back to them again and again for funky rhythms and bluesy solos with a mild amount of distortion, à la Robert Cray. The bridge humbucker, with its fat/bright response, which I assume has to do with the alnico poles, was just dynamite for everything from country twanging to heavily overdriven rock tones elicited by the Mesa's Mark IIC+, IV and Extreme modes.

It was just as easy getting killer overdrive tones from the Deluxe turned up to four or so, and boosted with the Mesa Cleo pedal [*see review, page 88*] or by using the LIII's onboard boost, which adds a little brightness to the sound and worked awesomely well with the sweet and slightly hollower timbres delivered in the LIII's middle position with both humbuckers running.

Our Fuchsia Sparkle LIII (also available in Bodhi Blue, Olive Pearl and Ocean Sparkle) is a tremendous guitar all around, with superb playability and ergonomics, a trem that feels butter smooth and keeps the tuning stable under hard workouts, and a range of tones that beg you to deploy it on practically any gig. It's the result of a design that works for all the different applications that Steve Lukather encounters in his professional life as one of the hardest-working guitarists around. The LIII is simply fantastic and earns an Editors' Pick Award.

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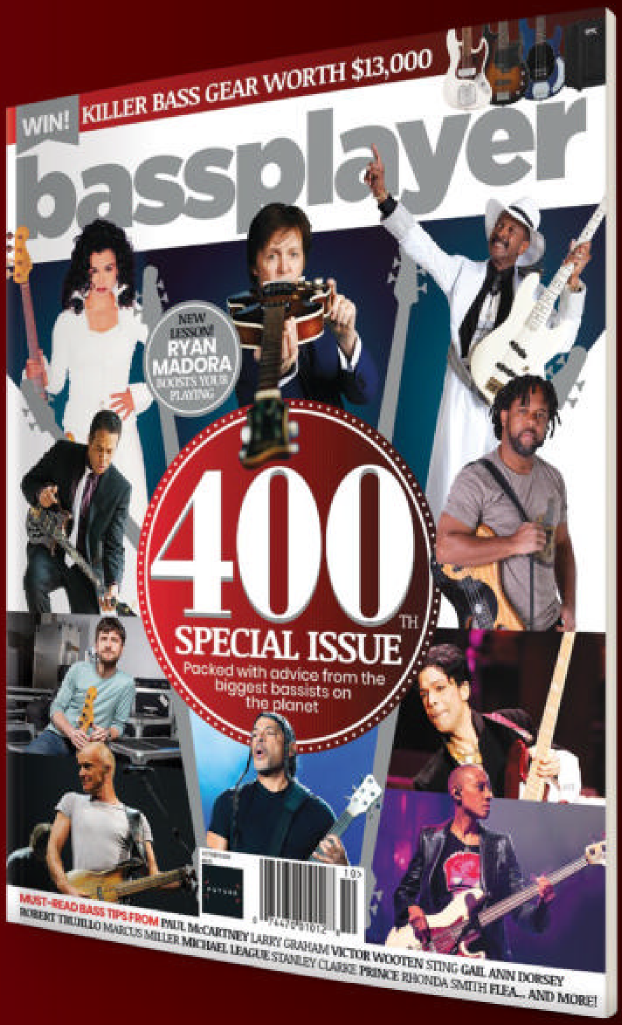
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Charvel

PRO-MOD DK22 SSS 2PT CM

TESTED BY JAMES ROTONDI

THE FIRST GENERATION of teenagers to idolize Eddie Van Halen's roaring brown sound, fiery and fluid speed phrasing, and trademark striped Charvel superStrats are mostly in their 50s now, graying a bit and wearing suits more often than spandex. And while owning a built-for-speed heavy-metal guitar, with all the requisite flashy appointments, is fine for kicks, the bulk of what passes for metal-performance guitars these days is just not — how to say it? — "age-appropriate" anymore.

A generation later, though, Charvel — the San Dimas legends who arguably kicked off the entire superStrat phenomenon in the late 1970s — bridge the divide with the excellent Pro-Mod series. The Pro-Mod guitars pair hot-rod performance features — including Gotoh trem/tailpieces, a wide neck radius and a hot humbucking bridge pickup — with classy, stripped-down aesthetics that make them as suitable for grown-up "dress gigs" as for high-flying fusion and metal jams. Younger players, too, may well find them a refreshing break from the deluge of more literal-minded vintage-style guitars, touching on an '80s vibe but feeling more newly minted, fresher and less cliché than either a reissue classic Fender or a maudlin metal machine.

Grown-up they may be, but the Pro-Mods are anything but boring. The DK-22 SSS 2PT CM reviewed here, for example, is flashy, but in an elegant way, with a lovely Pharaohs Gold satin finish, caramelized (i.e. roasted) maple neck and fretboard, and the kind of contoured, sleeker-than-a-Strat, alder Dinky body familiar to fans of Jackson's pointy metal machines. The DK-22, however, goes for minimalism. You'll find no pickguard whatsoever, no lightning bolts or skull graphics, and no Floyd Rose bridge or locking nut. A Gotoh Custom 510 tremolo bridge suits this upscale axe just fine, and there's even a pre-CBS-style licensed Strat headstock.

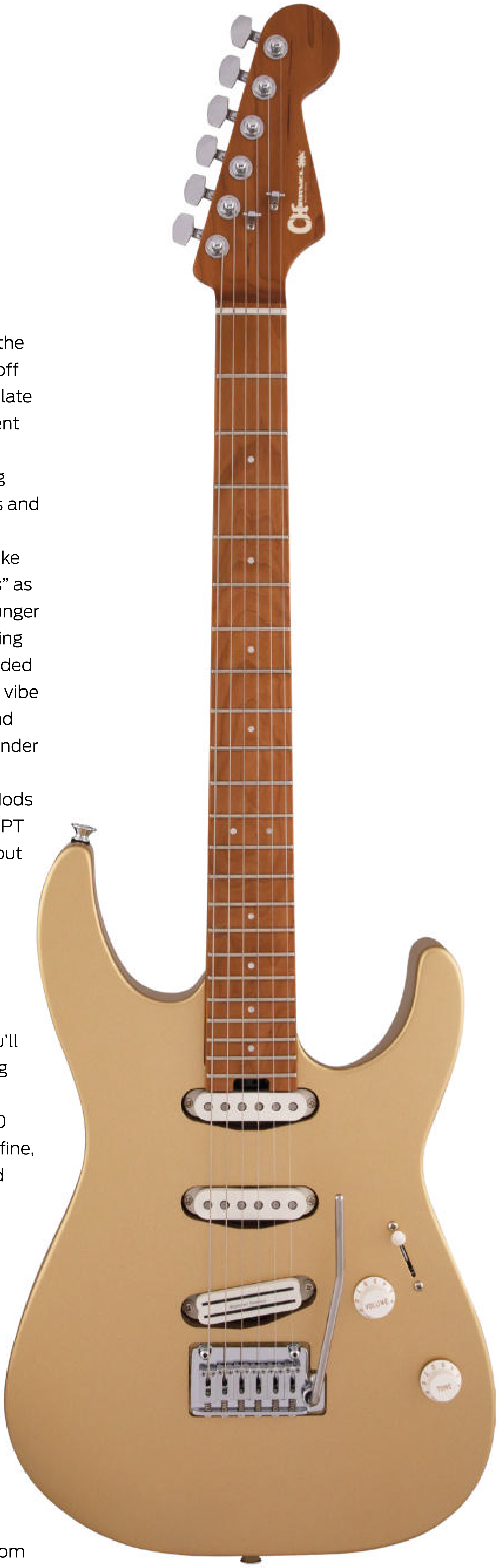
Heck, the front of the beautifully tapered DK-22 doesn't even boast an input jack. Instead, it's been cleverly tucked into a beveled edge on the backside of the lower bout, just under where a typical Strat jack would be located. With the jack removed, that leaves a single five-way blade switch, a 500k-ohm EVH Bourns low-friction potentiometer for volume and a single no-load tone control to grace the guitar's face, along with three terrific and distinct Seymour Duncan pickups: a Custom

SPECIFICATIONS

Pro-Mod DK22 SSS 2PT CM
CONTACT charvel.com
PRICE $1,049 street, gig-bag included

NUT WIDTH 1.6875"
NECK Two-piece graphite-reinforced caramelized maple
FRETBOARD Caramelized maple, 25.5" scale, compound 12"-16" radius
FRETS 22 jumbo nickel
TUNERS Charvel-branded die-cast
BODY Alder with satin finish
BRIDGE/TAILPIECE Gotoh Custom 510 tremolo
PICKUPS Custom Seymour Duncan Flat Strat SSL-6 RWRP single-coil (neck), Custom Seymour Duncan Flat Strat SSL-6 single-coil (middle), Seymour Duncan Hot Rails SHR-1B single-space humbucker (bridge)
CONTROLS 1 x master volume (500k Ω EVH Bournes low-friction pot), 1 x master No-Load tone, 5-way blade pickup switch
FACTORY STRINGS Nickel Plated Steel, .009—.042
WEIGHT 7 lbs, 7 oz.
BUILT Mexico

KUDOS Contoured body, outstanding playability, and tones from metal to soul
CONCERNS Liberal use of the trem can lead to tuning trouble



Hot Rails Strat SHR-1B single-space humbucker in the bridge, an overwound SD Flat Strat SSL-6 single-coil in the middle, and a Custom Flat Strat SSL-6 RWRP single-coil in the neck slot.

Plugged into a classic medium-to-high-gain amplifier — in this case, a Marshall JCM800 2203x — the DK-22's bridge pickup delivered immediate Eddie-approved growl, delicious pick harmonics, a balanced blend of grind and girth for palm-muted riffs, and a razor's-edge cut for runs from the 7th to 17th frets. Once the bridge pickup is paired with the middle pickup, though, the wind starts crying Mary, producing a grainy, warm, rounded-mid rhythm scoop that's perfect for Mayfield and Hendrix territory. The reverse-wound/reverse-polarity neck pickup on its own delivers syrupy, beady, vacuum-lifted SRV tone in spades. Pair it with the middle pickup, and switch to a clean amp (I used a 40-watt Fender Deluxe Reverb), and one enters classic indie-rock territory with aplomb, a sound perfect for those cleaner 16th-note African-inspired rhythms heard in Modest Mouse or Vampire Weekend. Yes, all that from a Charvel. You read correctly.

The 22-fret Charvel Speed Neck, custom Graph Tech TUSQ XL nut, sculpted bolt-on neck joint, jumbo frets and Gotoh tremolo bridge on the DK-22 comprise one of the friendliest fret spans imaginable. The hand-rubbed satin urethane finish, rolled edges and 25.5-inch scale length feel entirely comfortable, too. Not only is the compound 12-to-16-inch neck radius heaven sent for larger hands and sweeping arpeggios — as is the generous 1.6875-inch nut width — but the sculpted Shredder's Cut heel, with its scalloped lower back bout, gives your hands an unimpeded sense of space and control.

While exploring arpeggios and Eric Johnson–approved runs in the 12th-to-22nd fret range, I had the distinct impression that I was finding a strong and stable new carriage for my left hand and wrist in that area of the neck that allowed my technique to really show its colors. It's almost like the sensation of jogging with ankle weights and suddenly taking them off for the last mile: There's no resistance. (The smart, heel-mounted dual-action truss rod with adjustable spoke wheel makes the neck even more versatile and user friendly.)

The DK-22 usually ships with a set of .009–.042 nickel-plated steel strings, but I opted to put on a set of .010s, and I still felt like I was in the buttery-smooth realm of the super-shredder on the DK-22, with just a hint more work required for hammer-ons and big bends. If you thought your speed days were behind you, the DK-22 may just help you rediscover the joys of sprinting, without the silly spandex running outfit. And even if your top velocity isn't quite what it was in your 20s, the DK-22 is poised to speak with equal authority to the seasoned and understated player in you. Look at you, shredder, all grown up and still having fun.

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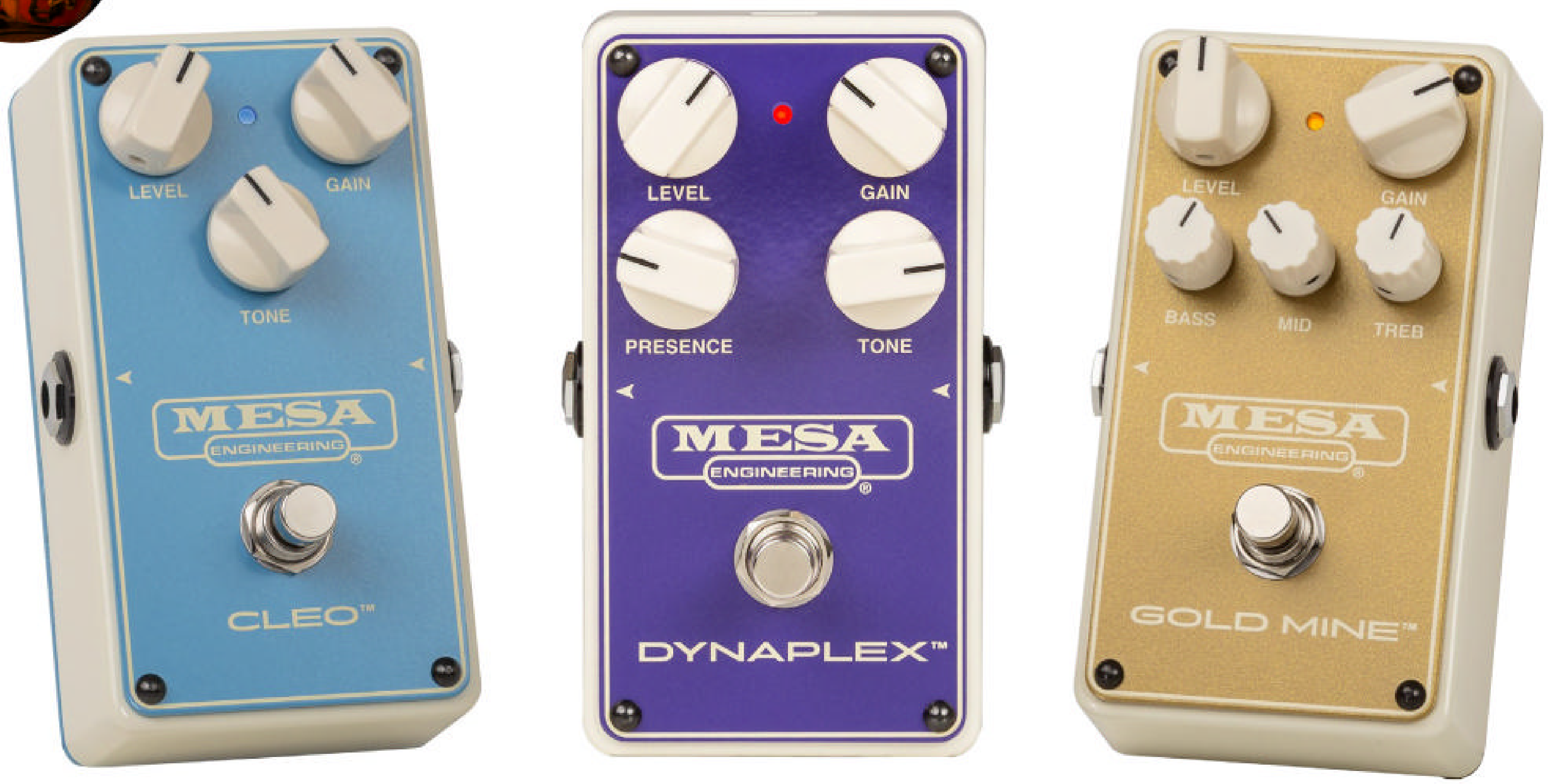

Mesa/Boogie

CLEO, DYNAPLEX AND GOLD MINE

GuitarPlayer Editors' Pick

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

THIS TRIO OF new overdrive pedals designed for low-, medium- and high-gain applications is intended to let players get the tones needed for everything from blues to hard rock and metal. The Cleo, Dynaplex and Gold Mine are made in Mesa's Petaluma, California, factory and feature die-cast aluminum housings, true-bypass switching and low-current-draw circuitry that can be powered by a nine-volt battery or external power. We tested the boxes with a selection of guitars that included a Gibson '59 Historic Les Paul, a Reverend Gristlemaster and a Hamer Newport, along with a Fender Deluxe Reverb and Boogie's latest 1x10 combo version of the Mark 5:25.

CLEO

As the lowest gain of the three, the Cleo could be thought of as Mesa's spin on a Tube Screamer, and, as such, it works great as a clean booster or lower-gain overdriver. But there's a difference here, as the Cleo is so transparent in comparison to the green classic from Japan. It has a bouncy, easy-to-play feel, yet doesn't compress the dynamic content, remaining open on top and very fast on your picking attack. The balanced response is evident from the get-go, as the Cleo delivered sweet and touch-responsive tones that in no way impeded hearing the distinct sonic qualities of guitars, and the presence and punch factor of the tones didn't require any preset midrange enhancement. With the gain set low and the level turned up, the Cleo added heft to the sound and could easily drive the Deluxe (with its volume around four) into grinding distortion — loud and cool, and so dynamically responsive when riding the guitar volume for cleaner and dirtier textures. Conversely, with the level turned down and the gain turned up to two o'clock or higher, the Cleo delivered sweet-sounding distortion and nice sustain at very controllable volumes.

This is one of the most natural-sounding and non-compressed-feeling overdrives I've heard, and it's well suited to blues, rock and roll, and other applications where you want the sound of the guitar and amp to stand out without a lot of extra, and perhaps unneeded, gain and EQ shaping from the pedal itself.

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT mesaboogie.com
PRICE $199 street each

Cleo
CONTROLS Level, gain, tone
I/O Input, output, 2.1 mm external adapter jack
EXTRAS True-bypass switching
BUILT USA
KUDOS A natural sounding and super clear low-gain OD pedal
CONCERNS None

Dynaplex
CONTROLS Level, gain, tone, presence
I/O Input, output, 2.1 mm external adapter jack
EXTRAS Internal EQ voicing switch, true-bypass switching
BUILT USA
KUDOS A stout, Brit-flavored grind pedal that nails it for classic and hard rock, as well as blues
CONCERNS None

Gold Mine
CONTROLS Level, gain, bass, mid, treble
I/O Input, output, 2.1 mm external adapter jack
EXTRAS Internal tight switch, true-bypass switching
BUILT USA
KUDOS Super-flexible high-gain distortion with expanded EQ and a useful tight switch
CONCERNS None

DYNAPLEX

With its purple paint and the "plex" in the name, it's pretty obvious where the Dynaplex is coming from, and this British-voiced pedal is an aggressive little beast, with a ballsy, mids-forward distortion tone that carries a cutting edge on top and plenty of low-end thrust. You could plug in and be quickly enamored with how vibey and amp-like it sounds for hard rock and old-school metal, but wait — there's more. You can also change the response quite dramatically via a two-position internal voicing switch (accessible by undoing four screws and removing the back plate), which can select a more "modern" scooped tone, if that's your preference.

The Dynaplex's gain range is huge, so there's no problem getting a ton of grind and sustain from single-coils, and the tone knob is musically voiced and rolls off the highs and softens the tone without losing any definition. It also adds volume as you turn it clockwise, making things not only brighter but more boosted. The presence knob doesn't noticeably increase sustain even when dimed, but it puts a cool sheen on the sound and allows the upper-midrange sparkle to really stand out in a blizzard of distortion. A superb pedal for heavier styles, the Dynaplex is a great choice if you're a fan of that classic modded-Marshall sound.

GOLD MINE

At the top of the gain range is the Gold Mine, which is designed to deliver the soaring sustain associated with Mesa's Mark series amplifiers, while offering a great deal of tonal flexibility courtesy of a three-band EQ with bass, mid and treble controls. This is a massive-sounding pedal with gobs of output and grind. Here too, the overall response can be optimized further via an internal two-position tight switch that, in the stock setting, keeps the low end more controlled and, well, tighter for focused high-gain solos and rhythm playing. Alternatively, you can select a looser response curve with increased low-end girth and a more scooped midrange. I had a hard time deciding which I preferred, but the looser version seemed to really groove with single-coils, while the stock (tight) position gave humbuckers a tauter dynamic feel that's pretty cool.

It all adds up to make the Gold Mine a flexible pedal that can elicit distortion tones with the raw muscularity of an EL34-powered British amp, the thick and juicy overdrive of a Mark IV, or the machine-like chug of a Recto. It also works delightfully for lower-gain tones — even clean boosting — so one could make a case that it's the best all-rounder of the bunch, although I certainly wouldn't mind having the Cleo, Dynaplex and Gold Mine on a board to allow for instant switching between these great flavors of grind.

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Fender

FULLERTON JAZZMASTER UKE

Guitar Player Editors' Pick

BY JIMMY LESLIE

"WHAT'S THAT?" "THAT'S cool!" "How much does it cost?" In nearly 20 years of reviewing gear, I've never seen another musical product arouse so much interest. What typically follows every such exchange is some version of "I want one." I'm not surprised, because I said the very same thing when Fender unveiled its new line of Fullerton ukuleles at the 2020 NAMM Show. When I learned the Fullerton Ukes would hit the street for about 200 bucks, I figured everyone would want one for themselves, for their kids or for a music-loving friend or acquaintance. I mean, what's not to like about ukuleles shaped like classic Fender guitars?

While these concert-sized Fullertons shaped like Teles, Strats and Jazzmasters are not the first-ever guitar-ukes, Fender deserves kudos for getting a lot of things right. The Fullertons don't look, sound or feel like toys. Fender evidently put ample research into the design, which includes a pickup and preamp system made specifically for the line. I was immediately drawn to the shape and Tidepool Blue hue of the Jazzmaster (also available in Olympic White). The glossy finish sparkles in the sun, and the matching headstock with four-in-line tuners gives it an extra-cool factor. The space-age offset shape not only looks rad — it's surprisingly comfortable, too, even when played standing up. It actually took a while before I realized that I hadn't put a strap on it.

Like the body's iconic shape, the neck has a familiarity that will appeal to guitar players, even though the fretboard's radius is flat. Maybe it's my eyes messing with my head as I look down on what appears to be a mini guitar with a bound neck, but the Fullerton feels more like a full-blown guitar neck on a uke than a thin ukulele neck on an instrument shaped like a guitar. Whats more, the Jazzmaster cutaway facilitates easy reach into the upper register.

For my first getaway in the year of the coronavirus, I took the Fullerton Jazzmaster Uke to Yosemite. It was a perfect fit for the car, and fabulous for campfire jams. Its tone was warm and on the mellow side, yet packed plenty of nylon-string "pop" when plucked with enthusiasm. The tone became more vivacious when I plugged it into a JBL Eon One Compact I'd brought along for Fourth of July jams. Taking full advantage of the Fullerton's onboard tuner, I altered the tuning without fear of breaking strings, as the Fullerton has a no-tie bridge and I'd tossed a spare set in my backpack, just in case.

The lack of any gig bag whatsoever was a bit of a bummer, but it proved instructive for this review. I put the Fullerton in my backpack and hiked way up a mountain to my favorite "secret" swimming hole. Almost upon arrival, the backpack came unzipped and the Fullerton fell out, "*Bang, bang, bang!*" It hit the granite stones, but luckily didn't slide into the creek. When I picked it up, I noticed it had suffered only a couple of barely noticeable dings. Surprisingly, the action was still on point, and I went about playing the Fullerton. Pretty soon, a scout leader brought a group of young boys and girls around the corner, and when I was spotted across a small bend in the creek, one of the girls — who so happened to be a mandolin player — shouted, "What's that?" The usual exchange followed. She'll probably have a Fullerton Uke of her own on her next adventure. I'm keeping this one for mine. It's easy to give Fender's Fullerton Jazzmaster Uke an Editors' Pick Award.

SPECIFICATIONS

Fullerton Jazzmaster Uke

CONTACT fender.com

PRICE $199 street

NUT WIDTH 1.38", synthetic bone

NECK Maple

FRETBOARD Walnut, 15.04" scale

FRETS 19 total, 14 to the body

TUNERS Sealed nickel

BODY Mahogany back and sides, laminated spruce top

BRIDGE Walnut

FACTORY STRINGS Fender Aquila Nylgut Concert Set

WEIGHT 1.8 lbs

BUILT China

KUDOS Stellar aesthetic. Good playability and tone. Highly inspirational

CONCERNS No gig bag included

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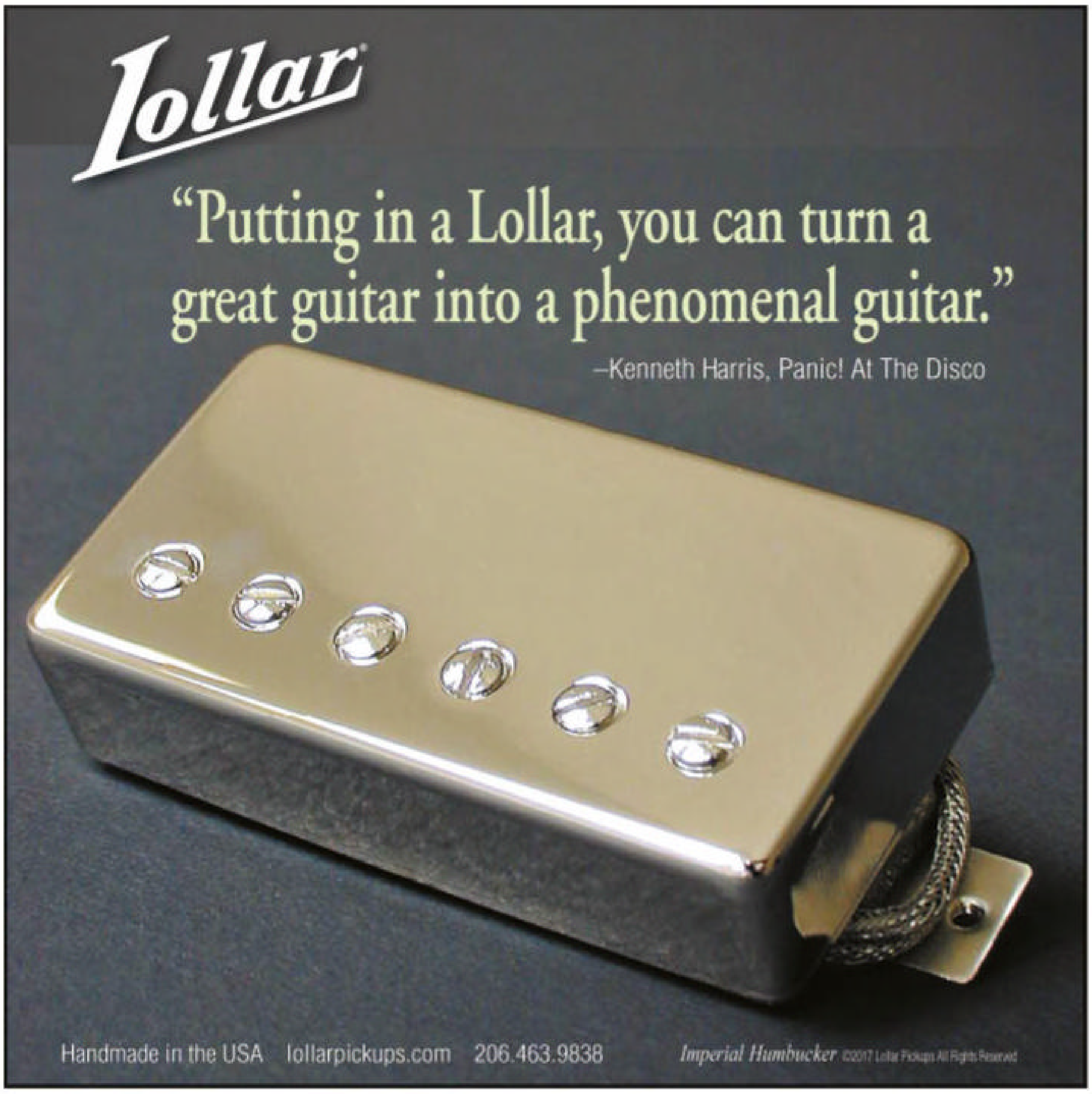

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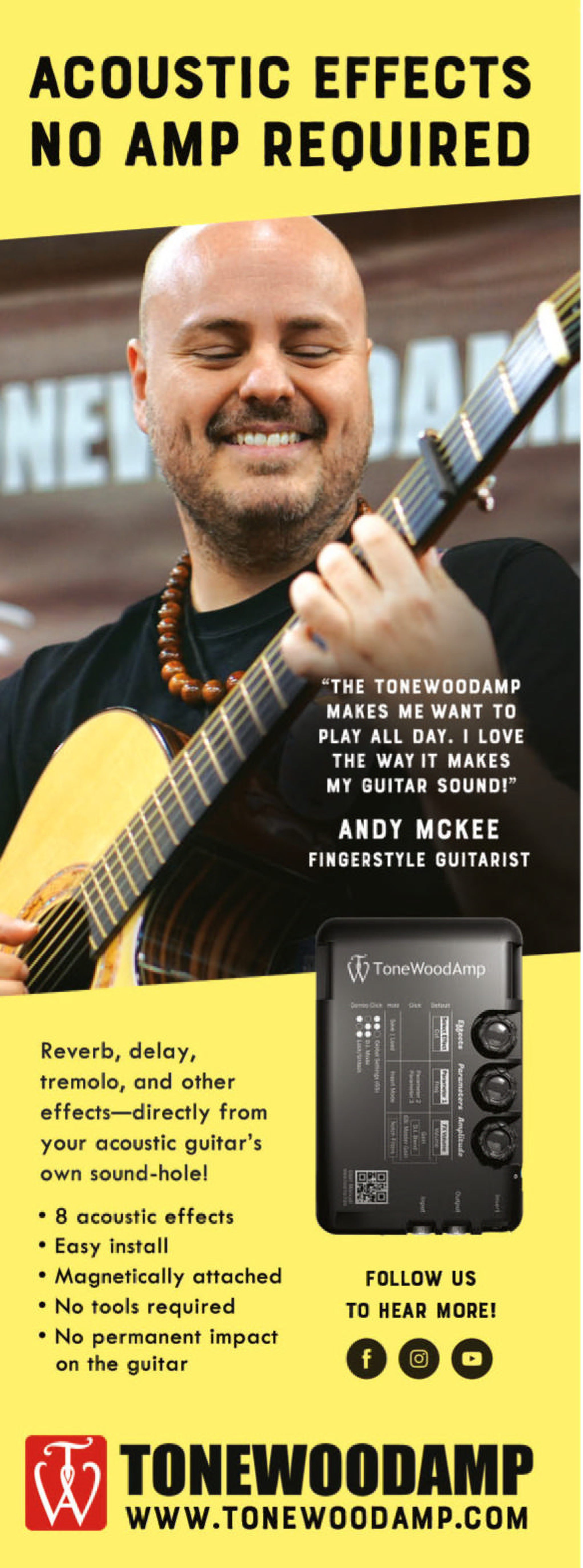
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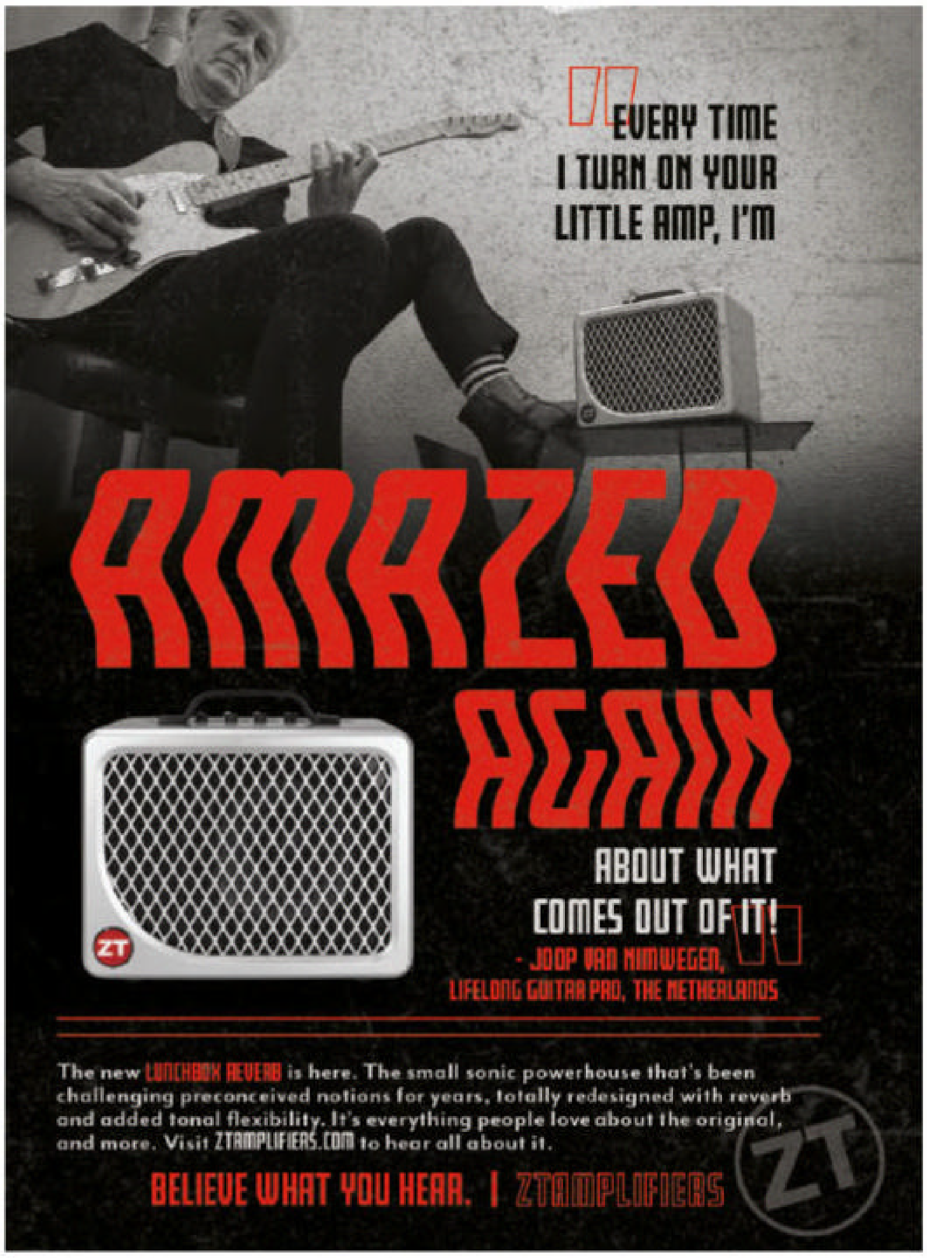
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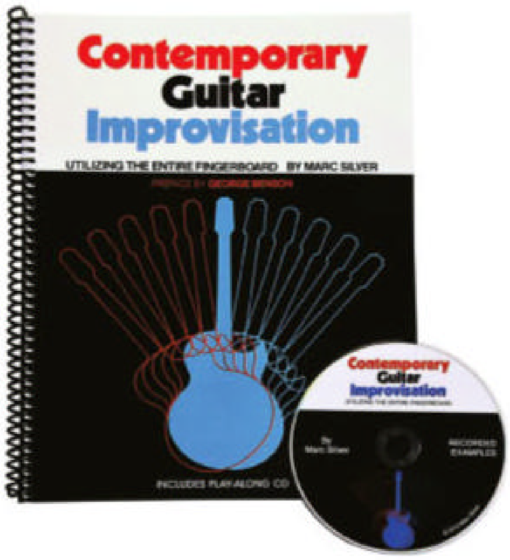
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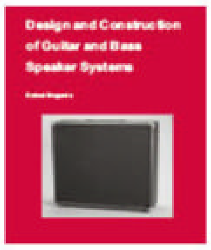
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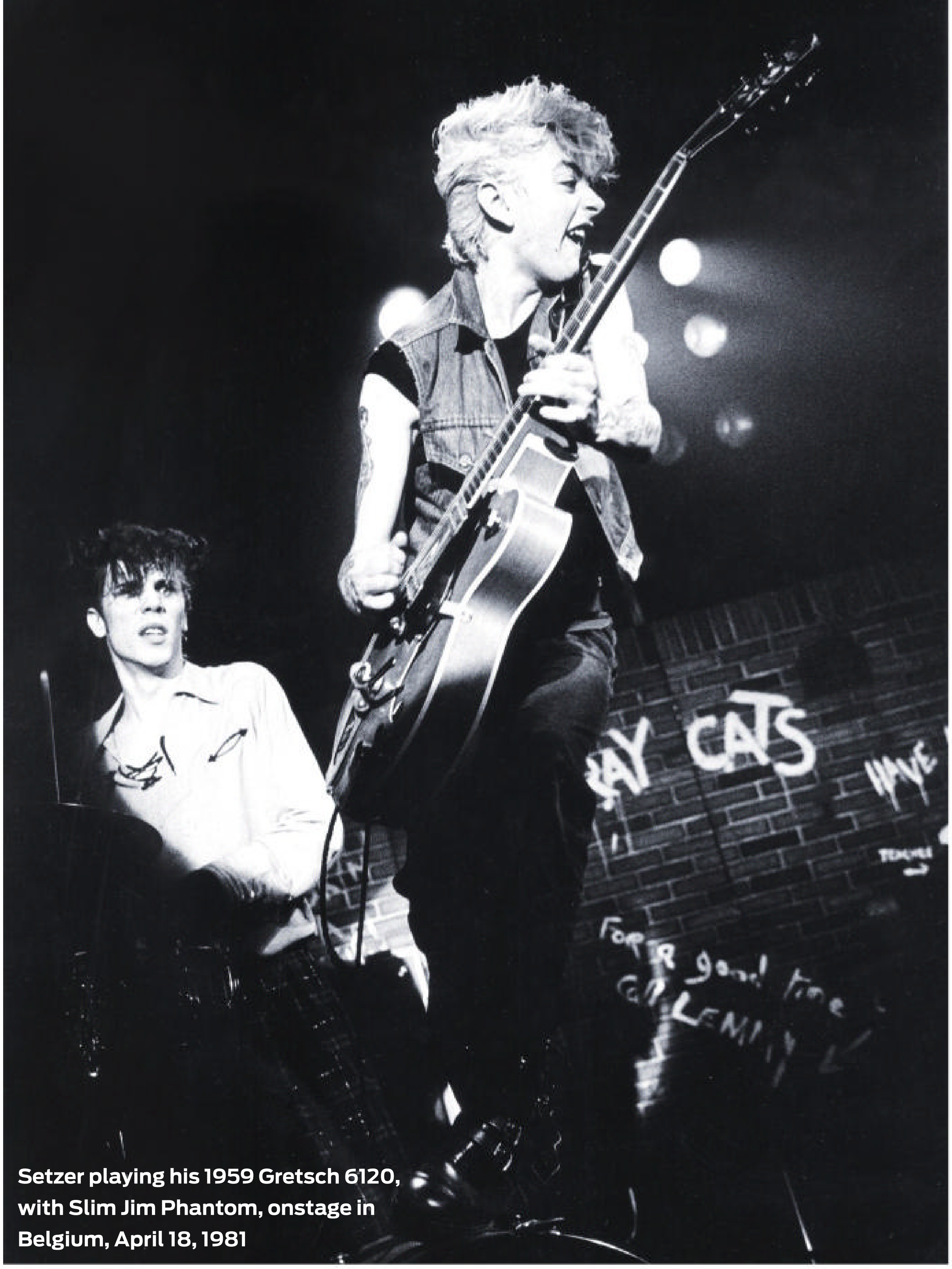

Setzer playing his 1959 Gretsch 6120, with Slim Jim Phantom, onstage in Belgium, April 18, 1981

GIE KNAEPS/GETTY IMAGES

How I Wrote...

"Runaway Boys"

Brian Setzer riffs on the Stray Cats' hit debut single.

BY MARK McSTEA

"IT'S THE FIRST song I ever wrote," Brian Setzer says of "Runaway Boys," the Stray Cats' debut single. "It really summed up everything I was trying to capture, which was my drive to write a new song in the rockabilly style, rather than just the same old I - IV - V thing." "Runaway Boys" not only put a spin on the well-worn rockabilly formula, it also scored the U.S. group a Top-10 hit when it was released in the U.K. in November 1980 as the first single from their forthcoming, eponymous debut album. At the time, the Stray Cats were London transplants, having realized that the U.K., with its thriving rock and roll scene, would be more receptive to their punk-fueled rockabilly. The group's debut album quickly scored two more U.K. hits, but it took a couple of years before MTV exposure brought the Cats fame in the United States.

ROCKABILLY REBELS

Setzer co-wrote the song with Stray Cats drummer Slim Jim Phantom, who supplied the lyrics. "We were both about 18 years old when we wrote it, so we were really feeling the whole 'rebellious teenager' thing," the guitarist says. "I think the song captured that sense of being young and trying to break out from home life. I definitely knew it was unique and unlike anything you would have heard on radio in the '50s. It helped us carve out our own sound."

SOMETHIN' ELSE

"Runaway Boys" was produced by Dave Edmunds, whose long rock and roll pedigree included late-'60s hits with his band Love Sculpture, an act whose repertoire comprised classic '50s rockers. Edmunds' knowledge of rockabilly made him the ideal choice of producer since — despite the song's nonstandard chord changes — Setzer wanted to keep "Runaway Boys" true to the rockabilly sound. "That clean, strong guitar, the echo, the slap bass and the big snare drum — the aim was to keep those elements intact and add something new," he says. "Dave really captured it, and I don't know whether anybody else could have done that. He understood exactly what we wanted."

"IT WAS WHAT EVERYBODY WAS LOOKING FOR — NOT THE SAME OLD ROCKABILLY BUT SOMETHING NEW"

Setzer played his 1959 Gretsch 6120 on the track, as he did on the rest of the group's debut album, using a variety of amplifiers supplied by Edmunds. "Dave knew how to perfectly capture the sounds we wanted," Setzer says. "There was no questioning how he worked. Once the recording was played back, I thought, That's it! There's nothing I would change."

RUNAWAY HIT

"Runaway Boys" was a pivotal moment in the Stray Cats' career. "It lit the fuse," Setzer says. "I think it was what everybody was looking for — not the same old rockabilly but something new. The sounds are familiar, and people love that sound, so it is relatable. But at the time, you didn't hear that music on the radio anymore, so it was as if it were forgotten. I remember, we were in Liverpool when we found out it was in the Top 10 in the U.K. pop charts, and that was an incredible thing to hear."

After 40 years of playing "Runaway Boys," Setzer says the song still feels fresh to him. It's even among the tracks featured on *Rocked This Town*, the Stray Cats' new live album from their 40th anniversary tour. "It's one song I never tire of," he says. "How could anyone not love their first hit record?"

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